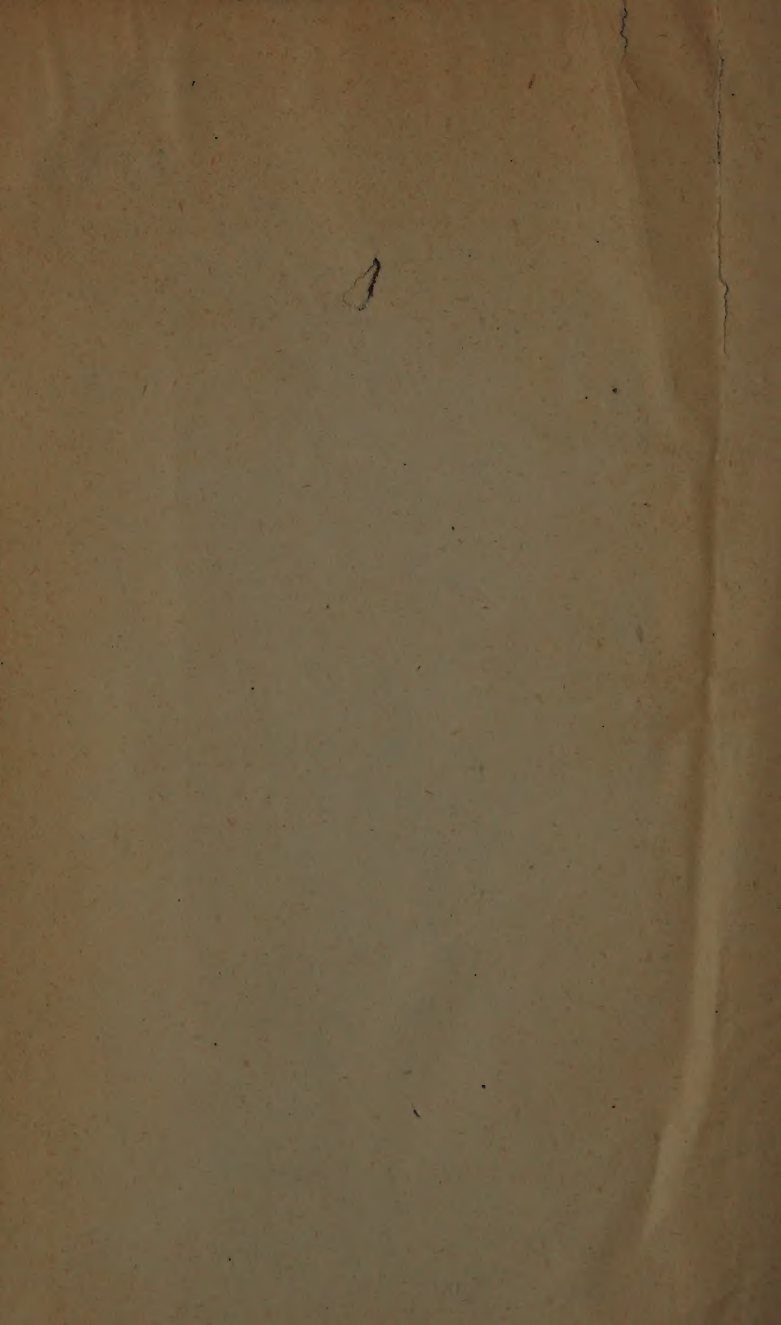


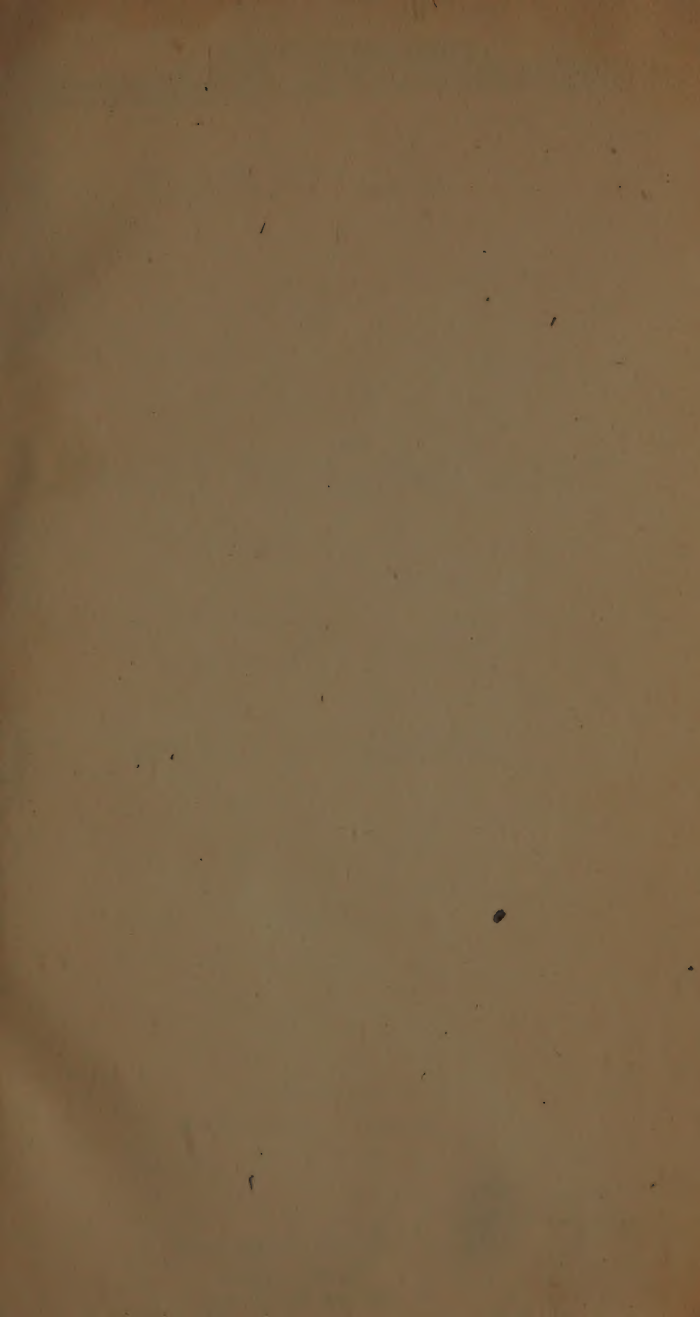




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BAPTISTS

AND

*from the Author
July 1865
Howard Rogers*

LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE.


BY

HENRY C. VEDDER.

286

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PREFACE.

THIS brief Historical Sketch of the Struggle of English Baptists for Liberty of Conscience was first published in three successive articles in the *Baptist Quarterly Review*, beginning with January last. The author does not pretend that the articles contain any thing unknown to well-informed students of History; but as the facts are not accessible to most people, and as they are frequently distorted and misstated by opponents of the Baptists, it has seemed to him and to the Publisher of the *Review* that it would be well to reprint them and give them a wider circulation. The circumstances of their origin have given the articles a tone of controversy that could not be eliminated without a reconstruction of the articles, a task for which the writer has neither time nor inclination at present. That they may inspire other Baptists to take a new interest in the glorious history of our fathers is his hope.

H. C. V.

NEW YORK, *August 21, 1884.*

BAPTISTS AND LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE.

THE ENGLISH BAPTISTS, 1500-1643.

"It belonged to the members of a calumniated and despised sect, few in number and poor in circumstances, to bring forth to public view, in their simplicity and omnipotence, those immortal principles which are now recognized as of divine authority and universal obligation. Other writers of more distinguished name succeeded, and robbed them of their honor; but their title is so good, and the amount of service they performed on behalf of the common interests of humanity is so incalculable, that an impartial posterity must assign to them their due meed of praise."* That such is the testimony of history with regard to the Baptists of England, and their struggle for liberty of conscience, is conceded by many learned and candid historians of different communions.† But recently men, neither learned nor candid, have not scrupled to deny that this praise is well bestowed; and others, learned but not candid, have devoted themselves to the ungrateful task of vilifying the men to whom the cause of religious liberty owes so large a debt. It has been vehemently affirmed that Baptists, so far from being pioneers in this cause, were no whit in advance of the Presbyterians and Independents in de-

* Price, "History of Non-conformity," I, §22.

† See Stoughton's "Ecclesiastical History of England," II, 232: "The Baptists were foremost in the advocacy of religious freedom, and perhaps to one of them, Leonard Busher, citizen of London, belongs the honor of presenting, in this country, the first distinct and broad plea for liberty of conscience." See, also, Lecky's "History of Rationalism," Chapter iv.

manding soul-liberty; that a part of them avowed persecuting principles and attempted to carry them into practice; that, in fact, the Presbyterians were the only advocates of a genuine toleration in England.* It will be the object of this paper to compare these conflicting statements with the facts of history, as attested by documents of unquestionable authenticity and by the writings of the opponents of the Baptists.

The assertion that Baptists have never persecuted, but have been the consistent advocates of entire freedom of conscience from the beginning, would perhaps have been contradicted with less heat if more pains had been taken to weigh its meaning. It was no doubt convenient, for purposes of controversy, to assume that it had a meaning which the words will not bear. It is not pretended that there has never been a Baptist false to the principles avowed by himself and his brethren. I maintain that no case has ever been produced of a persecutor who held substantially the views of Christian truth now professed by Baptists; but if such a case could be produced, it would not disprove the assertion that Baptists have never persecuted. Until it can be established that some body of Baptists avowed persecuting principles, and attempted to execute them, the assertion will stand uncontradicted. Then, too, the word "persecution" seems to need definition. By it is not meant the expression of mere opinions, in however violent terms, nor the application of ecclesiastical discipline,† but the punish-

* The writer fears that this may be taken by the readers of the REVIEW as a clumsy attempt on his part to perpetrate a joke at their expense, so he adds two brief quotations from articles by Professor Charles A. Briggs, of the Union Theological Seminary, in the *Presbyterian Review*: "If the Baptists or Quakers, or any other of the sects, had come into power, they would have been no less intolerant and persecuting than the others." (IV, 663.) "They [the Westminster divines] were not a whit behind the Independents and Baptists in forbearance and charity. . . . The one sought peace, charity, and the unity of Christ's Church. The other sought sectarian strife, division of Churches and families, and toleration in the exercise of all kinds of intolerance." (Ibid., p. 863.)

† A Presbyterian journal of high standing declares that Baptists still

ing of all dissent from a given standard of religious faith and practice by physical pains and penalties. What I assert, therefore, and what I expect to prove, is, that no body of Baptists ever advocated or practiced the punishment of dissent from their belief by the imposition of physical pains and penalties upon the dissenters. More: no reputable Baptist writer of any age can be quoted in the advocacy of persecution. If any dispute this, let them cover me with confusion by producing the quotation.

The earliest recognition in the literature of England of the principle of religious liberty is found in Sir Thomas More's "Utopia," which was printed in Latin at Louvain in 1516, and in English at London in 1551. In the account of the domestic institutions of that fabulous island, a decree of King Utopus is described. I quote from the revised translation of Ralph Robinson (1556), preserving its quaint orthography:

"Firste of all he made a decree that it should be lawfull for euerie man to fauoure and folow what religion he would, and that he mighte do the best he could to bring other to his opinion, so that he did it peaceablie, gentelie, quietlie, and soberlie, without hastie and contentious rebuking and inuehing against other. If he could not by faire and gentle speche induce them vnto his opinion yet he should vse no kinde of violence, and refraine from displeasaunte and seditious woordes. To him that would vehemently and frequently in this cause striue and contende was decreed, banishment or bondage."*

We are further told that King Utopus decreed this liberty on the ground that, "thoughe there be one religion, whiche alone is trewe, and al other vaine and superstitious, yet did he wel foresee (so that the matter were handled with reason, and sober modestie) that the trueth of the own powre would at the last issue out and come to lyghte."† It is sufficiently astonishing to find so broad-minded and liberal a view as this taken, even as a mere speculation, by a Roman Catholic statesman of the sixteenth century; but

show a persecuting spirit because they practice so-called "close communion." See *The Evangelist*, for August 30, 1883.

* Arber's reprint, p. 145.

† Ibid., p. 146.

it can not with any degree of truth be said that Sir Thomas More had any serious intention of advocating religious liberty for England, because he described it as a recognized principle in Utopia. This is evident from the character of the book itself, which is a combination of the speculative and ideal element that marks Plato's "Republic," with the romantic and adventurous element of which Swift and Defoe afterwards made so effective use in "Gulliver's Travels" and "Robinson Crusoe." Utopia is represented as an island, in some unknown part of the Atlantic, and the book purports to be an account of the manners and institutions of the inhabitants, as given the author by one Raphael Hythlodæ, who has made a voyage to that mysterious land. It is impossible for the critic to lay his finger on any one of the things described as existing in this island and say positively that More intended to express his approval of it. For example, he mentions that the Utopians believed that man is perfectly good by nature; that they held the souls of brutes to be immortal; that among their priests were women; that a large part of the people were idolaters. The passage on this latter point is as follows:

"There be diuers kindes of religion not only in sondrie partes of the Illande, but also in diuers places of euery citie. Some worship for God the sonne: some the monne: some, some other of the planettes. There be that giue worship to a man that was ones of excellent virtue or of famous glory, not only as God, but also as the chieftest and hyghest God. But the most and the wysest parte (reiectyng al these) beleue, that there is a certain Godlie powre, vnknown, euerlastinge, incomprehensible, inexplicable, farre aboue the capacitie and retche of mans witte, dispersed throughoute all the worlde, not in bignes, but in vertue and power. Him they call father of al."*

Now, to a Catholic, estimating all of these religions as equally false, it may easily have seemed a reasonable thing that they should tolerate each other, as the heathen religions did in the Roman Empire; but it would have seemed a vastly different thing to him to propose that the Catholic faith, the only true religion, should tolerate deadly error of

* Ibid., p. 143.

any kind. There is no evidence that this sort of toleration ever entered into the mind of More, even as a speculation.

On the contrary, his career as chancellor shows him to have been a persecutor of the keenest sort. The fires that had been suffered to die out under Woolsey were rekindled at Smithfield under More. Froude quotes several cases from Foxe of men imprisoned and burned at the stake during More's tenure of office.* He not only persecuted, but he defended persecution in his controversy with Tyndal, while he was chancellor, among other things saying: "Sure if the prelates had taken as good heed in time as they should have done, there should peradventure at length fewer have been burned thereby. But there should have been more burned by a great many than there have been within this seven year last passed; the lack whereof, I fear me, will make more burned within this seven year next coming than else should have been burned in seven score."† These words and deeds make it plain that the author of "Utopia" can not justly be called an advocate of religious liberty.

Before the "Utopia" had appeared in English dress, the people called Anabaptists—of whom there are traces in England from the time of Wiclif on—had become numerous in all parts of England. Like their brethren on the Continent, accepting the Scriptures as their sole guide and authority in religion, they from the first maintained the right of the individual believer to interpret those Scriptures for himself. The maintenance of liberty of conscience was logically necessary in order to justify their existence; and accordingly we find them everywhere insisting on this as a cardinal principle. For a long time our knowledge of the Anabaptists is confined wholly to the account given by their persecutors, whose ignorance and prejudice led them to distort views that were hateful to them, and whose testimony is therefore to be received with caution and sifted carefully.

* "History of England," II, 89-94.

† "Confutation of Tyndal" (1532). Quoted in Morley's "First Sketch of English Literature," p. 242.

One of the earliest documents in which a summary of the Anabaptist heresies is given is a proclamation of Henry VIII, issued in 1540, in which they were thus enumerated: "Infants ought not to be baptized; it is not lawful for a Christian man to bear office or rule in the commonwealth; every manner of death, with the time and hour thereof, is so certainly prescribed, appointed, and determined to every man by God, that neither any prince by his word can alter it, nor any man by his willfulness prevent or change it."*

The literature of the time is full of references to this alleged Anabaptist heresy with reference to magistracy, and a few illustrations out of the great mass that might be cited are herewith given:

"In these our days there have risen up wicked and ungodly spirits, which deny the office of the magistrates and high powers to be the ordinance of God, and affirm that it can by no means stand with the gospel of Christ."†

"Whether may a man sue forfeits against regrators, forestallers, and other oppressors? Or ought patience to restrain us from all suit and contention? 'Aye,' saith master anabaptist; 'for Christ our Master, whose example we must follow, he would not condemn an advouress woman to be stoned to death according to the law, but shewed pity to her, and said, "Go, and sin no more," John viii; neither would he being desired to be an arbiter, judge between two brethren, and determine their suit, Luke xii. When the people would have made him a king, he conveyed himself out of sight, and would not take on himself such office. Christ, the Son of God, would not have refused these offices and functions if with the profession of a Christian man it were agreeable with the temporal sword to punish offenders, to sustain any public room, and to determine controversies and suits; if it were lawful for private men to prosecute such suits, and to sue just and rightful titles. He *non est dominatus, sed passus*; would be no magistrate, no judge, no governor, but suffered and sustained trouble, injury, wrong, and oppression patiently. And so must we; for Paul saith "That those which he foreknew he also ordained before—*ut essent conformes*

* Strype, "Memorials of Archbishop Cranmer," I, 552. Oxford ed.

† "A pleasante new nosegay, ful of many godly & sweete flowres, lately gathered by Thomas Becon." (1550?) Becon's Works (Publications of Parker Society), I, 211. A marginal note refers this to Anabaptists.

imagini Filii sui—that they should be alike fashioned into the shape of his Son."**

"I should have told you here of a certain sect of heretics that speak against this order and doctrine; they will have no magistrates nor judges on the earth. Here I have to tell you what I heard of late, by the relation of a credible person and a worshipful man, of a town in this realm of England, that hath above five hundred heretics of this erroneous opinion, as he said. [A marginal note says, 'He meaneth the Anabaptists, for this is one of their errors.']"†

"Here [Luke xii, 14] an Anabaptist will say: 'Ah! Christ refused the office of a judge; *ergo*, there ought to be no judges nor magistrates among Christian men. If it had been a thing lawful, Christ would not have refused to do the office of a judge, and to have determined the variance between these two brethren.'"‡

Some of the Anabaptists, at least, were charged with also opposing war, capital punishment, and bloodshed of every kind. A single quotation in proof from Coverdale will suffice. In "The Old Faith," he discourses on the warring of the Jews with the idolatrous nations, and declares that it was "no fleshly unfaithful work, whom no man ought to follow, as some being wrapped with the unsteadfast spirit of the Manichees and Anabaptists do mean."||

But what has all this to with liberty of conscience? Much, every way. It is of the nature of an axiom that a sect whose members deny the right of a Christian man to hold the office of a magistrate, and deny the civil power the right to put men to death even for murder, can never constrain men to accept their faith by the terrors of the civil law. Liberty of conscience is included in the denial of a Christian's right to aid in the enforcement of the civil laws, as the whole includes one of its parts; if a Christian man can enforce no law, he can not enforce a law against heresy. And it is not at all wonderful that the Anabaptists

* Works of Roger Hutchinson (Parker Society), p. 323. See, also, p. 330. The sermon from which the above extract is taken was preached prior to 1560.

† Latimer's Sermons (Parker Society), p. 151. Date, 1549.

‡ Latimer's Sermons, p. 272. Date, 1550. See, also, a sermon of Archbishop Whitgift, in Strype's biography of him (Oxford ed.), III, 77.

|| "The Old Faith." Works of Miles Coverdale (Parker Society), I, 51.

came to hold this view of the magistracy for a time. Misled on the one hand by a too literal interpretation of a few texts of Scripture, and on the other by the unchristian cruelty that uniformly disgraced the magistracy of their time, it is no marvel if they declared that to be a magistrate and a Christian were incompatible things; for to be a magistrate, as the laws then stood, was to be a persecutor of all "heretics," a murderer of innocent saints under the forms of law. Let it be borne in mind, however, that the bitterest persecutor of the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century nowhere charges them with holding the view that a Christian man is absolved from obedience to the civil law, and become a law unto himself. It was reserved for the malice of a later time to fabricate that slander.

The earliest record of an explicit declaration in favor of religious liberty by an Anabaptist, on English soil, is the confession of faith written by Hendrik Terwoort, a Fleming by birth, who was burned on Friday, June 22, 1575. The story of his martyrdom, one of the most affecting in the annals of the Church, is given at length by Van Braght.* In his admirable confession is the following paragraph:

"Observe well the command of God: 'Thou shalt love the stranger as thyself.' Should he then who is in misery, and dwelling in a strange land, be driven thence with his companions, to their great damage? Of this Christ speaks, 'Whatsoever ye would that men

* *Het Bloedig Toonel of Martalaers-Spiegel des Doopsgeinde*, II, 894-712. Amsterdam, 1685. On the character of Terwoort and his companions, see Hopkins, "The Puritans and Queen Elizabeth," II, 13-16. Bishop Fuller informs us that Fox, the martyrologist, made an eloquent plea for Terwoort's life, and gives his letter to Queen Elizabeth, but the request was refused; and accordingly he and one Jan Peeters were burned at Smithfield, and, as Fuller adds, "died in great horror, with crying and roaring." "Church History of Britain" (Oxford ed.), IV, 390. That the spirit which demanded the death of this inoffensive Christian is not yet extinct, may be inferred from the following foot-note to an account of his martyrdom, by a modern Churchman: "Its lineal descendants [speaking of the Anabaptist sect] at the present day are a great curse to the country. For in many places they still do much to prevent the lower classes having their children christened, so that many thousands year by year die unbaptized and unregenerated." See "The Church under Queen Elizabeth," by Rev. Frederick George Lee, D. D., vicar of All Saints', Lambeth, II, 17.

should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.' O that they would deal with us according to natural reasonableness, and evangelic truth, of which our persecutors so highly boast! For Christ and his disciples persecuted no one; but, on the contrary, Jesus hath thus taught, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you,' etc. This doctrine Christ left behind with his apostles, as they testify. Thus Paul, 'Unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it.' From all this it is clear, that those who have the one true Gospel doctrine and faith will persecute no one, but will themselves be persecuted."

That these were not the mere personal views of a man about to suffer death, and crying out like a coward for the mercy he would have been unwilling to extend to others, is evident enough from their whole tenor. That similar views were held by all the Anabaptists of his time in England is testified by their opponents. Thus, in 1589, one Dr. Some, a man of standing in the English Church, wrote "A Godly Treatise," in which he charged the Anabaptists with holding the following deadly errors:

"That the ministers of the gospel ought to be maintained by the voluntary contributions of the people;

"That the civil power has no right to make and impose ecclesiastical laws;

"That people ought to have the right of chusing their own ministers;

"That the high-commiſſion court was an anti-Christian usurpation;

"That those who are qualified to preach ought not to be hinder'd by the civil power, etc."*

The same writer says that there were several Anabaptist conventicles in London at the time he wrote, from which it may reasonably be inferred that these heresies were widely held. The leaven began to spread, and other voices than those of Anabaptists were raised in behalf of toleration. Among these was the founder of Congregationalism, concerning whom his latest and best-informed historian thus writes:

"Robert Browne, I must think, is entitled to the proud pre-eminence of having been the first writer clearly to state and defend in the English

* Quoted by Crosby, "History of the English Baptists," I, 76, 77.

tongue the true—and now accepted—doctrine of the relation of the magistrate to the Church. He says the magistrates ‘haue no ecclesiasticall authoritie at all, but onelie as anie other Christians, if so be they be Christians.’ And again: ‘If these the magistrates will commaunde the souldiour to be a minister, or the preacher to giue ouer his calling, and chaunge it for an other, they ought not to obeye him. . . . In all things wee must firste look what is the Lordes will and charge, and then what is the will of man. . . . And this freedome haue all Christians, that they consider what is lawful, what they may doo, and what is expedient, and in no case bee brought vnder the power of anie thing, as Paule teacheth vs.’”*

There is much more to the same purpose, but Dr. Dexter himself supplies evidence that the Brownists did not sympathize with their leader on this point.† Indeed, he expressly claims for Browne that he “was in advance of his age” in advocating such opinions. A recent writer has also shown‡ that, during the brief period of his advocacy of them, Browne was in close association with a body of Dutch Anabaptists at Norwich, from whom he may fairly be presumed to have received these ideas. In his later writings he repudiated them, and they were not accepted by a single one of his immediate successors. Harrison, his co-laborer, and Barrow, Greenwood, Ainsworth, Robinson, with one accord, held doctrines the very reverse of these. On this point Congregational authorities are themselves agreed. ||

Another English writer who seems to have been led to the border-land of advocacy of the true theory of Church and state, was “the Judicious Hooker,” who has been

* Dexter, “The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years,” p. 101. The above quotations are from a tract printed in 1582.

† Ibid., pp. 84, 85.

‡ Professor A. H. Newman, in *The Examiner* of August 30, 1883.

|| It is sufficient to cite a single one, Robert Barclay, in his “Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth” (London, 1878). After a sketch of the opinions of Helwys and others, especially Robinson, he says: “We have, therefore, a distinct line drawn between the clear and full principles of religious liberty advocated by Helwys, and the associated Churches of the General, Arminian, or Mennonite Baptists, and the modified principles of Robinson and the Churches of the Moderate Independents,” p. 97.

quoted as an advocate of religious liberty. In his "Ecclesiastical Polity," he says:

"There is no cause given unto any to make supplication, as Hilary did, that civil governors, to whom commonwealth matters only belong, might not presume to take upon them the judgment of ecclesiastical causes. If the cause be spiritual, secular courts do not meddle with it: we need not excuse ourselves with Ambrose, but boldly and lawfully we may refuse to answer before any civil judge in a matter that is not civil, so that we do not mistake the nature either of the cause or of the court, as we easily may do both, without some better direction than can be had by the rule of this new-found discipline. But of this most certain we are, that our laws do neither suffer a spiritual court to entertain those causes which by law are civil, nor yet if the matter be indeed spiritual, a mere civil court to give judgment."*

This is nothing less than a denial that in England men were punished by the civil power for spiritual offenses—a denial that reads somewhat queerly in connection with the martyrdom of Hendrik Terwoort, and the history of the next sixty years of the English people. Hooker's words are in no sense an advocacy of religious liberty, though the principle on which such liberty rests is recognized distinctly enough. The trouble with the English laws was that this recognized principle was not consistently carried out.

One other case of the alleged advocacy of religious freedom by others than Baptists at this time demands a brief consideration. In 1609 was printed "an humble supplication for TOLERATION and Liberty to enjoy and observe the ordinances of Jesus Christ, in the administration of his churches, in lieu of human constitutions." This has been claimed by some Congregational writers as proof that the Independents were the first to advocate in England religious liberty for all.† But the facts already cited are sufficient to prove the priority of the Anabaptists in this field. There can be no question, also, that this petition emanated from the Puritan party in the English Church, not from the In-

* Book VIII, ch. viii, 9. Date, 1600.

† Hanbury, "Historical Memorials relating to Independents," I, 224. London, 1840.

dependents; and its contents show that complete religious liberty was not in the thoughts of the writers, as a single quotation will show:

"We do humbly beseech Your Majesty not to think that, by our suit for the said toleration, we make an overture and way for toleration unto Papists, our suit being of a different nature from theirs, and the inducements thereof such as can not conclude aught in favor of them, whose head is antichrist, whose worship is idolatry, whose doctrine is heresy, and a professoion directly contrary to the lawful state and government of free countries and kingdoms."*

There was never yet a religious party that did not ask toleration for itself. The Romanists had petitioned before this (1604) for toleration "as neither in reason of state a thing hurtful, nor by the doctrine of Protestants unlawful."† But no one would infer from this that the Romanists were prepared to tolerate others should they regain the power to persecute. No party save the Anabaptists had yet arrived at the notion that equal rights for all religious beliefs was the ideal condition of things in a free state. That idea has never yet fully penetrated the British mind, though active persecution ceased long ago.

Early in the seventeenth century the Anabaptists ceased to hold that a Christian man could not be a magistrate, could not take an oath in the courts, or bear arms in defense of of his country. It is more than possible that they had never, as a body, held these beliefs. Their denial of magistracy may have amounted only to this, at any time, that they denied the authority of the magistrate in matters spiritual; and this denial may have been misconstrued or distorted into the denial of magistracy as a lawful civil institution among Christians. If during the sixteenth century they protested against the charges made against them, their protests have been lost; but from the early part of the seventeenth century down to the present we have an unbroken chain of apologies and Confessions, that witness at once

* Underhill, "Struggles and Triumphs of Religious Liberty," p. 206.

† Ibid., p. 207.

their submission to all lawful authority and their zeal in the cause of equal rights of conscience for all men.

The first of these Confessions is that of John Smyth. It will not be disputed that he and his followers were Englishmen, though dwelling for a time in Holland on account of persecution, and that they were Baptists. The Confession has come to us in two forms: one is a summary of its points deemed heretical by John Robinson, pastor of the English (Congregational) Church at Leyden, who published an answer to it in 1614; the other is the original document, still preserved at Amsterdam, a translation of which is given by Dr. Evans.* The following is Robinson's account of the points that concern our present purpose:

"83. The office of a magistrate is a permissive ordinance of God, etc.

"85. That Christ's disciples must love their enemies, and not kill them; pray for them, and not punish them, etc. And Christ's disciples must, with him, be persecuted, afflicted, murdered, etc., and that by the authority of the magistrate.

"That the magistrate is not to meddle with religion or matters of conscience, nor to compel men to this or that form of religion; because Christ is the King and Lawgiver of the conscience.

"Lastly, that Christians must judge all their causes of difference among themselves; and may not go to law before magistrates, nor use an oath."†

Article 86 of Smyth's Confession declares:

"The magistrate, by virtue of his office, is not to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, nor to compel men to this or to that form of religion or doctrine; but to whom leave the Christian religion to the free conscience of every one, and to meddle only with political matters. . . . Christ alone is the King and Lawgiver of the Church and the conscience."‡

* "Early English Baptists," I, Appendix.

† Quoted by Crosby, I, Appendix, pp. 66-71.

‡ These words dispose of the claim made by Dr. Schaff that the Westminster Confession "expresses for the first time among the confessions of faith, whether consistently or not, the true principle of religious liberty, which was made the basis of the Act of Toleration, in the noble sentiment of Chapter xx, 2, '*God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men,*'" etc. The same principle was expressed in the Confession of the Seven Churches (1643). I can not re-

Three years after this Confession was written appeared the first book written by an Englishman in which liberty of conscience for all men, irrespective of their religious beliefs or unbeliefs, is advocated in explicit and unmistakable terms. Even Browne had not expressed himself with entire clearness on this question, and it is by no means certain that he favored the toleration of Catholics and Jews. The author of this book was Leonard Busher, of whom about all that is known is, that he was "a citizen of London," a Baptist, for a time a resident of Holland, where he was a leader in a movement similar to that of Smyth. The title of the book is, "Religious Peace; or, a Plea for Liberty of Conscience;" and its contents are a broad-minded argument, based on the Scriptures, for the freedom of every man to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience. His main contention is that except a man be born again he can not see the kingdom of God; that regeneration is the result of faith in Jesus Christ; and that no king or bishop is able to command faith. Persecution, therefore, is irrational, and must fail of its object; men can not be made Christians by force. To this he adds another appeal: even Turks, infidels, and the heathen tolerate those of other beliefs than their own; therefore,

"HOW MUCH THE MORE OUGHT CHRISTIANS TO TOLERATE CHRISTIANS, WHEN AS THE TURKS DO TOLERATE THEM? SHALL WE BE LESS MERCIFUL THAN THE TURKS? OR SHALL WE LEARN THE TURKS TO PERSECUTE THE CHRISTAINS? IT IS NOT ONLY UNMERCIFUL, BUT UNNATURAL AND ABOMINABLE; YEA, MONSTROUS FOR ONE CHRISTIAN TO VEX AND DESTROY ANOTHER FOR DIFFERENCE AND QUESTIONS OF RELIGION."*

He even pleads for this liberty to be granted to the Romanists—the first Englishman who had the courage to do so—and argues that this could be done with entire frain from acknowledging, in connection with this criticism, the uniform candor and Christian courtesy displayed by Dr. Schaff in his treatment of Baptists in their relations to this question of liberty of conscience. See his "Creeds of Christendom," I, pp. 798–803, 846, 847.

* "Tracts on Liberty of Conscience" (publications of the Hanserd Knollys Society), p. 24.

safety to the state. This must have been considered by his contemporaries an unheard-of stretch of generosity. He also advocated freedom of the press in no doubtful terms:

"That for the more peace and quietness, and for the satisfying or the weak and simple, among so many persons differing in religion, it be lawful for every person or persons, yea, Jews and papists, to write, dispute, confer, and reason, print and publish any matter touching religion, either for or against whomsoever, always provided they allege no Fathers for proof of any point of religion, but only the Holy Scriptures."*

In this Busher (and those whom he represented) was not only in advance of his generation, but of his century. Even Milton—who is universally regarded as the broadest-minded man of his day—in the most eloquent plea for the freedom of the press in all English literature, or in any literature, makes the following abatement:

"I mean not tolerated Popery, and open superstition, which as it extirpats all religious and civill supremacies, so it self should be extirpat, provided first that all charitable and compassionat means be us'd to win and regain the weak and the misled: that also which is evil or impious absolutely either against faith or manners no law can possibly permit, that intends not to unlaw it self: but those neighboring differences, or rather indifferences, are what I speak of, whether in some point of doctrine or of discipline which though they may be many, yet need not interrupt *the unity of the spirit*, if we could but find among us *the bond of peace*."†

That the "God-gifted organ-voice of England" could find no better words than these to speak in behalf of the toleration of the papists, is sufficient evidence how far Leonard Busher was in advance of his time in the advocacy of the principles of religious freedom.‡

* Ibid., p. 51.

† "Areopagitica" (1644). See Milton's Works (Bickers ed.), IV, 445. Compare also his tract, "Of True Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration," in which he declares the toleration of Romanists to be impossible, because they are idolaters.

‡ Busher was also the author of a tract entitled "A Scourge of Small Cords, wherewith Antichrist and his Ministers might be driven out of the Temple of God." The *Independent* has cited this as an evidence that, in spite of his teachings in "Religious Peace," Busher did advocate persecution. But the tract was never printed, owing to the author's poverty, the

The year following (1615) saw the publication of a tract on "Persecution Judg'd and Condemned: in a Discourse between an Antichristian and a Christian;" probably written by a member of the congregation of Mr. Helwys.* A single sentence from the dedicatory "Epistle" will suffice to show what was its testimony on this question:

"We do unfeignedly acknowledge the authority of earthly magistrates, God's blessed ordinance, and that all earthly authority and command appertains unto them; let them command what they will, we must obey, either to do or to suffer upon pain of God's displeasure, besides their punishment: but all men must let God alone with his right, which is to be lord and lawgiver to the soul, and not command obedience for God where he commandeth none." †

The next document of the kind is "A most Humble Supplication," presented by those who describe themselves as "unjustly called Anabaptists," to Charles I, at the assembling of Parliament in 1620. In substance it quite agrees with the two treatises already noticed, and quotations from it would only try the patience of the reader to no good purpose. It may be said, however, that it is not merely a plea for the toleration of the petitioners, but an earnest argument against religious persecution of every kind. ‡

We have already seen that the idea of toleration had begun to make its way; but the first distinct, unmistakable plea for universal religious liberty, from any other than a Baptist, was made by William Chillingworth, in his book, "The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way of Salvation" (1637). Educated at Oxford, converted to Romanism by a Jesuit, and reconverted to the Church of England by Laud,

manuscript was lost, and nothing whatever is known as to its contents and character. Such controversial methods as this incident marks show the desperation of the cause in which the *Independent* and Professor Briggs are embarked, in their attempt to fasten the charge of intolerance on any reputable Baptist writer.

* For a generous testimony by an Independent to the value of this and other Baptist pleas for liberty of conscience, see Brook's "History of Religious Liberty (London, 1820?), I, 421-423.

† "Tracts on Liberty of Conscience," p. 100.

‡ Ibid., pp. 183-231.

he ended by adopting rationalistic principles and doubting parts of both the Athanasian Creed and the Thirty-nine Articles. To one of so unsettled beliefs, persecution for the sake of belief would naturally seem ridiculous, and he denounces it, as Green says,* "in words of fire:"

"Take away this persecution, burning, cursing, damning of men for not subscribing the words of men as the words of God: require of Christians only to believe Christ, and to call no man master but him; let them leave claiming infallibility that have no title to it, and let them that in their own words disclaim it, disclaim it also in their actions. . . . Protestants are inexcusable if they do offer violence to other men's consciences.

"Whatsoever man or Church doth for any error of simple belief deprive any man so qualified as 'above [*i. e.*, believing the Apostle's Creed] either of his temporal life, or livelihood, or liberty, or of the Church's communion, and hope of salvation, is for the first, unjust, cruel, and tyrannous; schismatical, presumptuous, and uncharitable, for the second."†

These are noble words, and far be it from any Baptist to deny the sincerity of their writer. But they were the words of a single man, who stood alone among his contemporaries in the Church of England. It was a full half-century before that Church could be persuaded to accept the truth that Chillingworth so boldly advocated. But we have seen that, long before these words were penned, these principles were held and advocated by considerable bodies of Baptists, not merely by individuals among them. It is not possible in the present state of knowledge to trace, step by step, the earlier history of the Anabaptist Churches in England, and to prove the continuous advocacy of these principles; but from about the year 1633 the English Baptists have a history that is unbroken and tolerably well known. In the year 1643 was issued the first of their Confessions, with the title, "A Confession of Faith of Seven Congregations or Churches of Christ in London, which are commonly (but unjustly) called Anabaptists." Its purpose was apologetic, as the preface distinctly states. They were

* "History of the English People" (Harpers' ed.), III, 311.

† "Religion of Protestants," p. 249. Comp. 371 *et passim*.

accused, among other things, of "disclaiming of magistracy, denying to assist them either in persons or purse, in any of their lawful commands, doing acts unseemly in the dispensing the ordinance of baptism, not to be named amongst Christians."* The statements of this Confession with reference to the authority of the magistrate are almost wholly in the language of Scripture:

"XLVII. A civil magistracy is an ordinance of God, set up by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well; and that in all lawful things, commanded by them, subjection ought to be given by us in the Lord, not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake: and that we are to make supplications and prayers for kings, and all that are in authority, that under them we may live a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.

"The supreme magistracy of this kingdom we acknowledge to be the king and parliament. . . . And concerning the worship of God; there is but one lawgiver, . . . which is Jesus Christ. . . . So it is the magistrate's duty to tender the liberty of men's consciences, Eccles. viii, 8 (which is the tenderest thing unto all conscientious men, and most dear unto them, and without which all other liberties will not be worth the naming, much less enjoying), and to protect all under them from all wrong, injury, oppression and molestation. . . . And as we can not do any thing contrary to our understandings and consciences, so neither can we forbear the doing of that which our understandings and consciences bind us to do. And if the magistrates should require us to do otherwise, we are to yield our persons in a passive way to their power, as the saints of old have done, Jas. v, 4."†

This is the first embodiment of the principle of freedom of conscience for all men in a Confession that represented a body of associated Churches. Those who published it to

* Dr. Featly, in his scurrilous and indecent "The Dipper Dipt," adds to these accusations a choice assortment of vulgar slanders, such as that the Anabaptists allowed plurality of wives, and even held that none of their sect could commit adultery, because they were so knit to one another as to be all one body (p. 246 *sq.* Seventh edition. London, 1660). At the same time he is constrained to admit that their Confession is wholly unexceptionable, except in its doctrine of the ordinances.

† "Confessions of Faith" (publications of Hanserd Knollys Society), pp. 11-48, and Crosby, I, Appendix, pp. 7-26. Compare, also, Articles XLIX and L, the latter of which declares it to be lawful for a Christian man to be a magistrate, and to take an oath. Even the bitter and abusive Featly was compelled to confess that he could find no fault in this Confession, though he slanderously affirmed that the practice and the professions of Anabaptists did not agree.

the world held, in all but a few points of small importance, precisely those views of Christian truth that are held by Baptists to-day. "For substance of doctrine," any of us might subscribe it without a moment's hesitation. On the strength of this one fact, Baptists might fairly claim that, whatever might have been said by isolated individuals before, they were the pioneer body among modern Christian denominations to advocate the right of all men to worship God, each according to the dictates of his own conscience, without let or hindrance from any earthly power.

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THE ENGLISH BAPTISTS, 1644-1689.

IN a former article the history of the doctrine of liberty of conscience for all men was traced in England from the reign of Henry VIII to the publication of the Baptist Confession of 1643. It appeared that down to that year William Chillingworth was the only Englishman not a Baptist who consistently and unwaveringly defended the right of every man to interpret the Scriptures for himself, and to worship God as his conscience prompted him, without interference on the part of the secular power. During this period there is no case producible of a Baptist who was any thing else than the consistent and unwavering advocate of this principle. It remains now to trace the history of this idea to the year 1689, when it took form in the Act of Toleration.

The year 1644 was noteworthy for the republication, with a second preface, of the Confession of the Seven Churches, and for the printing of what is probably the most famous book in all the literature of this subject. Roger Williams was that year in London, whither he had come for the purpose of securing a royal charter for his new colony among the Narragansett Indians, and he took advantage of this fact to get printed his book, "The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution."* The teachings of this book are too well known to need description here, especially as but for the

*There are two excellent reprints of this rare book. One is in the publications of the Hanserd Knollys Society, the other in the publications of the Narragansett Club. The latter is edited with great care and fidelity by Rev. S. L. Caldwell, D. D., the accomplished president of Vassar College.

accident of its publication in London it has really nothing to do with the history of the principle of religious liberty in England. It is vitally connected with the history of that principle in the United States, of which I hope to write at some future time.

The seven years from 1643 to 1650 were years of undisputed Presbyterian domination, in spite of the growing strength of the Independents. During this time the severity of former persecutions was greatly relaxed, and under the measure of comparative liberty that they enjoyed the Baptists began to increase rapidly. They became prominent among the adherents of Cromwell, and gained sufficient influence to be feared, and therefore to be let alone. Yet their toleration was not a legal *status*; they still had no civil rights that their stronger neighbors were bound to respect, and it was only the dire necessity of uniting all their forces against the king which led the Presbyterian Parliament to refrain from active measures of repression. The leading Westminster divines rebuked Parliament in sermons and pamphlets for suffering the Baptists to increase, but political considerations were, for a time, paramount. A single incident illustrates the Presbyterian idea of liberty of conscience at this time. In 1646 one Morgan, a Roman Catholic, unable to obtain priest's orders in England went to Rome for them, and on his return was hanged, drawn, and quartered for this heinous offense.* The unspeakable Papist could not be tolerated on any terms by the Presbyterian party.

The year following this atrocious crime, committed in the name of pure and undefiled religion, appeared the tract on "The Necessity of Toleration," by Samuel Richardson, a prominent Baptist, probably a member of John Spilsbury's Church.† He lays down the general proposition "that

* Neal III, pp. 314, 315.

† I found this inference on the fact that Richardson's name is grouped with that of Spilsbury in the signatures to the Confession of the Seven Churches, in both the first and the second editions. He was the author of eleven other pamphlets. ("Tracts on Liberty of Conscience," pp. 245, 246.)

religion ought to be free," in support of which he advances five considerations, of which the first is, "Because it is God's way to have religion free, and only to flow from an inward principle of faith and love, neither would God be worshiped of unwilling worshippers." He then submits seventy searching questions to be answered by those that think otherwise—questions that go right to the root of the whole matter in dispute—and devotes some closing pages to subsidiary matters connected with the doctrine of liberty of conscience. It would consume space to no good purpose to quote at length from this treatise.

In this same year certain Baptists united with some Independents in "A Declaration by Congregational Societies in and about the City of London." As this is the first recorded case* in which any body of Christians other than Baptists put themselves on record as opposed to persecution for religious belief, it may be well to quote at some length from this document. After setting forth that they have been falsely accused by their enemies, the makers of the declaration say:

"It is true we have asserted that, as belonging unto men, which in some respect and consideration, may be called a liberty. But what liberty? Not a liberty to harm any man in word or deed; nor a liberty for any man to be corrupt, vain, loose, or inordinate in judgment or conversation; for such a liberty as this can do no man good. And God, that knows our hearts, knows that we desire not any liberty for any, but in order to the good of all.

"We have, indeed, thought this but reasonable, that while men behave themselves peaceable and justly, as touching civil conversation, making no encroachments upon the civil power, nor any breaches upon the names and reputations, the estates or bodies of men, nor doing things inconsistent with moral principles, they should not suffer in their names, bodies, or estates, from the hands of the civil magistrate, or any other men whosoever, merely for what they conscientiously do, in things pertaining to the worship of God. . . .

"And as it would be no less than an usurpation for a state ecclesiastical to impose laws upon a state civil, and to exercise a compulsive

* It might be urged that there is no evidence that the Independents, who took part in making this declaration represented any but themselves, but I forbear pursuing so ungenerous an objection.

power therein, so likewise (not to say what the magistrate may do in recommending to the people the things of the Gospel) it can be no less than an irregularity for a state civil to impose laws upon a state ecclesiastical and spiritual, so as to exercise a coercive and worldly power therein, by inflicting a worldly and corporal punishment on men for a non-observance of them."*

The body of this document is devoted to an elaborate argument that magistracy is necessary, to disclaiming the idea that Christians are to have all things in common, as well as protesting against the scurrilous charge that they approved polygamy. Among the Baptists who signed the declaration were Hanserd Knollys and William Kiffen. In view of the previous history of Baptists in connection with this doctrine, and the silence of Independent writers concerning it, it is not a violent assumption if we suppose the Baptists to have been the leaders in composing and publishing this declaration.

The year 1647 is also memorable for two other publications that have a significant bearing on this doctrine of liberty of conscience; one is the Westminster Confession, the other Jeremy Taylor's "Liberty of Prophesying." Of the former I shall have more to say hereafter. The latter is noteworthy as showing that adversity was beginning to open the eyes of the bishops and priests of the English Church, now overborne and persecuted in turn by the Presbyterians whom they had in their day of power sternly repressed, that persecution for religious belief is a thing hard to be borne. Bishop Taylor's plea was a two-edged sword; it cut both ways, wounding alike the intolerant churchman and the intolerant presbyter, though, perhaps, aimed especially at the latter. He laid down clearly enough the correct principle on which religious liberty rests, but even he

* "Confessions of Faith," pp. 275, 277, where the full title is given as "A Declaration by Congregational Societies in and about the City of London, as well of those commonly called Anabaptists, as Others." In way of *vindication* of themselves. Touching: 1. *Liberty*. 2. *Magistracy*. 3. *Propriety*. 4. *Polygamy*. Wherein their judgments concerning the particulars mentioned are tendered to consideration, to prevent misunderstanding.

shrank from carrying that principle to its legitimate outcome. He was insistent that Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Independent ought to tolerate each other, but as for the Anabaptist and Papist he had doubts. Thus, on the very same page, these contradictory opinions are to be found:

"It is also a part of Christian religion, that the liberty of men's consciences should be preserved in all things, where God hath not set a limit and made a restraint; that the soul of man should be free, and acknowledge no master but Jesus Christ; that matters spiritual should not be restrained by punishments corporal.

"It concerns the duty of a prince, because it concerns the honor of God, that all vices and every part of ill life be discountenanced and restrained; and therefore in relation to that, *opinions are to be dealt with*. For the understanding being to direct the will, and opinions to guide our practices, they are considerable only as they teach impiety and vice, as they either dishonor God or disobey him. Now all such doctrines are to be condemned."*

A close reading reveals other similar inconsistencies. For example, Section 18 of the work is given to "a particular consideration of the opinions of the Anabaptists," the conclusion reached being that, so far as concerns their denial of infant baptism, "the men are to be treated with the usages of a Christian. . . . If they can not be persuaded, they must be left to God."†. But Section 19 attempts to prove "that there may be no toleration of doctrines inconsistent with piety or the public good," and here it is said of the Anabaptists, "but then for their other capital opinion, with all its branches, that it is not lawful for princes to put malefactors to death, nor to take up defensive arms, nor to minister an oath, nor to contend in judgment, it is not to be disputed with such liberty as the former [infant baptism]. . . . And, therefore, here they are to be restrained from preaching such doctrine." In Section 20 the question is considered, "How far the religion of the Church of Rome is tolerable?" and precisely similar conclusions are reached and defended on the ground that the Roman Church teaches doctrines that result in impiety and disloyalty. The preaching of such doctrines should,

* Works (Bohn's Ed.), II, page 384.

† Ibid., II, page 410.

therefore, be restrained. In short, we find that Bishop Taylor occupies the ground taken by Milton—a great step forward, doubtless, for an English churchman, but still in the rear of the Baptists.*

But, it might be urged—in fact, it has been urged with insistence and bitterness—that the Baptists were not sincere in their professions of zealous devotion to the principle of liberty of conscience for all; or, at least, that the declarations already quoted from their Confessions and from their published writings did not represent the Baptists as a whole—that there were Baptists as intolerant and as desirous of persecuting their opponents as the most zealous Presbyterian of them all. The events of the year 1653 are appealed to as furnishing full confirmation of this view of the case. In that year, it will be remembered, the “Rump” Parliament was dissolved, and Cromwell was proclaimed “Lord Protector,” according to the provisions of an Instrument of Government framed by a convention he had called for the purpose of devising a scheme for regulating the affairs of the nation. It should seem that some of the Baptists were ardent republicans, and in these proceedings of Cromwell they saw only the workings of his ambition to be king. We know that four years later certain Baptists protested against the proposition to confer this title upon him, and that their protest had weight.† Some of them, especially General Harrison and the Rev. Vavasor Powell, did so now—the latter denouncing Cromwell from the pulpit at a meeting in Blackfriars of certain “Fifth-Monarchy” men. There were fears also for a time of trouble in Ireland from the Baptists, who were reported to be extremely disaffected with the new government. On these facts a charge is based that a part of the Baptists, at least, were disposed towards a religious movement that must have resulted in persecution; and, to make the charge more plaus-

* It is notorious also, that after the Restoration Bishop Taylor retracted these sentiments, and declared that the publication of them had been nothing more than a *ruse de guerre*—a fact that is a serious blot on his reputation.

† “Confessions of Faith,” pp. 335-338.

ible, a terrible picture has been drawn of the "Fifth-Monarchy" men, and the Baptists have been represented as being inextricably entangled with their nefarious designs.*

The simple fact is that the Baptists, as a body, were loyal to the Commonwealth and its head; that the few who were disaffected opposed Cromwell partly on civil grounds and partly in the belief that the time had come for the setting up of the Fifth Monarchy, which was to be the kingdom of Christ upon earth. Men's laws and traditions were to be altogether swept away, and the world was to be ruled by the law of Christ. This would, of itself, exclude the idea of persecution when once this kingdom should have been established; and before its establishment persecution would not have been in their power. It is not true that the "Fifth Monarchy" men, as a body, believed in setting up this kingdom by the sword, as their public declarations clearly show.† To prove that a Baptist was concerned in these "Fifth Monarchy" demonstrations does not show that he cherished any idea of punishing dissent by the sword or by any form of persecution; still less does it show that his brethren sympathized with any persecuting notions.

But we have abundant testimony that the great body of the Baptists had no sympathy with the Chiliastic ideas that lay at the basis of the Fifth Monarchy movement; that they utterly condemned all conspiracies against the *de facto*

*The *Independent* of September 13, 1883.

†Ivimey I, pp. 258, 259. In a declaration published by them at this time they announced their purposes as follows: "We find much misunderstanding among some, and misrepresentation among most, of the Fifth Monarchy or kingdom of Christ in the nations, which the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament do clearly and plentifully declare, with a positive period to the worldly and heathenish laws, ordinances, and constitutions of men, as they are now executed in the nations of the world. . . . We, therefore, are resolved, according to the presence and assistance of the Lord with us, to entertain a serious consideration and debate for the benefit of all others, touching the premises, viz., of the laws, subjects, extent, rise, time, place, offices, and officers of the Fifth Monarchy or kingdom, whereby the world must be governed, according to the Word of God, without the mixture, as now is, of men's laws and inventions, whether in respect of magistracy or ministry, Church or civil affairs, which

government; and that they exhorted all their brethren to follow their example in rendering loyal obedience to the powers that be. An extant letter from Mr. Kiffin and others to the Baptists in Ireland gives interesting evidence as to the feeling of the Baptists. The writers express sorrow that "there is raised up in many amongst you [the Baptists in Ireland] a spirit of great dissatisfaction and opposition against this present authority," and exhort them to think better of their determination to protest publicly against Cromwell. They say:

"And this we are clearly satisfied in [that] the principles held forth by those meeting in Blackfriars, under pretense of the Fifth Monarchy, or setting up the kingdom of Christ, to which many of those lately in power adhered, had it been prosecuted, would have brought as great dishonor to the name of God, and shame and contempt to the whole nation, as we think could have been imagined."

The letter closes with a solemn appeal in these words:

"We do therefore beseech you, for the Lord's sake and for the truth's sake, that it be not evil spoken of men, seriously weigh these things; for surely if the Lord gives us hearts we have a large advantage put into our hands to give a public testimony in the face of the world. That our principles are not such as they have been generally judged by most men to be; which is, that we deny authority, and would pull down all magistracy. And if any trouble should arise, either with you or us, in the nations, which might proceed to the shedding of blood, would not it all be imputed and charged upon the baptized Churches? And what grief and sorrow would be administered to us, your brethren, to hear the name of God blasphemed by ungodly men, through your means? This we can say, that we have not had any occasion of sorrow from any of the Churches in this nation with whom we have communion; they, with one heart desiring to bless God for their liberty, and with all willingness to be subject to the present authority. And we trust to hear the same of you, having lately received an epistle written to us by all the Churches amongst you, pressing us to a strict walking with God, and warning of us to take heed of formality, the love debate we intend to hold in this city of London." This makes it evident, as Ivimey says, that a large part of the Fifth Monarchy men cherished no ideas of subverting the existing government by violence, still less of forcing their beliefs on others at the point of the sword. The use made of Ivimey's testimony by the *Independent*, quoting whatever bears against Baptists with gusto, and suppressing every point in their favor, is characteristic of its controversial methods, and would be held disgraceful in a secular journal with no Christian character to sustain.

of this world; that we slight not our mercy in the present liberties we enjoy."*

Whether to this appeal or to the sober second thought is to be attributed the subsequent quiet of the Irish Baptists is not quite certain, but a letter in Thurloe's "State Papers" informs us that there was no further trouble:

"As to your grand affairs in Ireland, especially as to the Anabaptist party, I am confident they are much misconceived in England, Upon the change of affairs here was discontent enough, but very little animosity. For certainly never yet any faction, so well fortified by all the offices, military and civil, almost in the whole nation, did quit their interest with more silence."†

What did more than any thing else, probably, to reconcile Baptists to the government of Cromwell was the increased measure of toleration they enjoyed under it. The Instrument of Government did not, indeed, wholly abolish an established Church—which is incompatible with entire freedom of conscience—but did curtail it of most of its powers and privileges. The following articles relating to religion are rarely seen by readers of history and are worth quoting here:

"35. That the Christian religion contained in the Scriptures be held forth and recommended as the public profession of this nation, and that, as soon as may be, a provision less subject to contention, and more certain than the present, be made for the maintenance of ministers; and that till such provision be made the present maintenance continue.

"36. That none be compelled to conform to the public religion by penalties or otherwise; but that endeavors be used to win them by sound doctrine, and the example of a good conversation.

37. That such as profess faith in God by Jesus Christ, though differing in judgment from the doctrine, worship, or discipline publicly held forth, shall not be restrained from, but shall be protected in the profession of their faith and exercise of their religion, so as they abuse not this

* "Confessions of Faith," pp. 322-326.

† Quoted in "Confessions," page 326. On this same point see also the "Address of the Baptized Christians in Dublin to the Lord Protector" (pages 339-341 of "Confessions"), in which they say: "We shall only further add that we do assure your highness, that whatsoever report you have heard of either the Church baptized in Dublin, or any other Church in the same faith in Ireland, it is far from our hearts to disown the Lord's authority in your highness, or his work in your hands." (Signed by 119 persons. Date uncertain. Probably about 1657.)

liberty to the civil injury of others, and to the actual disturbance of the public peace on their parts; provided this liberty be not extended to popery or prelacy, or to such as under a profession of Christ hold forth and practice licentiousness.

"38. That all laws, statutes, ordinances, and clauses in any law, statute, or ordinance, to the contrary of the aforesaid liberty, shall be esteemed null and void."^{*}

This gave great offense to the Presbyterians, but it so nearly approached the Baptist idea of toleration that they accepted it as, on the whole, satisfactory.[†] More than a generation was to pass before any part of these principles should finally become established; and not till nearly a century later was this toleration, from which popery was now expressly excepted, extended to Catholics and Jews. The Baptists were conscious, however, that this state of things was not likely to continue long unless the principle of toleration were incorporated in the law of the land. They continued in their writings and confessions, therefore, to urge the duty of all Christians to tolerate those who differed from them in religious belief. With this they uniformly coupled a disclaimer of any such doctrine of liberty as implied license, and enforced the duty of the Christian to render obedience to the civil magistrate in all secular affairs. Indeed, in the Confession of Somerset[‡] the advocacy of religious liberty is only inferential from the general tone of the articles, but the duty of obedience to the powers that be is specifically laid down in these words:

"44. That the ministry of civil justice (being for the praise of them that do well, and punishment of evil doers) is an ordinance of God, and that it is the duty of the saints to be subject thereunto, not only for fear but for conscience' sake, and that for such prayers and supplications are to be made by the saints."

In the face of repeated solemn declarations of this kind it is attempted to hold the Baptists accountable for the

^{*} Neal, IV, page 69.

[†] Ibid., IV, pp. 51, 71.

[‡] "A Confession of the faith of several Churches of Christ in the county of Somerset, and of some Churches in the counties neer adjacent." (1656.) The Confession is signed by sixteen men in the name of as many Churches. See "Confessions of Faith," pp. 104, 105.

insurrection of a few misguided enthusiasts in the year 1658, just as the Protector's life was drawing to a close. The leader was one Thomas Venner, a wine-cooper, and General Harrison was suspected of complicity in the attempt. and committed to the Tower with others.* No man has gone more deeply into the literature of this period than Thomas Carlyle, and he declares that "Harrison [was] hardly connected with the thing except as a well-wisher," and gives an account of the "Fifth Monarchy men," that differs materially from that of some recent Pedobaptist writers.† If it is true that Baptists, as such, were engaged in these uprisings, and their ulterior object was the persecution of all who differed from them in religious belief, we must regard it as the superlative degree of impudence and hypocrisy for them to put forth a little later another Confession, in which they held the following language regarding liberty of conscience on the one hand, and the duty of a Christian to the civil government on the other:

"24. That it is the will and mind of God (in these Gospel times) that all men should have the free liberty of their own conscience in matters of religion or worship without the least oppression or persecution, as simply upon that account; and that any in authority otherwise to act, we confidently believe is expressly contrary to the mind of Christ, who requires that whatsoever men would that others should do unto them, they should even do unto others. (Matthew vii, 12.) And that the tares and the wheat should grow together in the field (which is the world), until the harvest (which is the end of the world). (Matthew xiii, 29, 30, 38, 39.)

"25. We believe that there ought to be civil magistrates in all nations, *for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.* (1 Peter ii, 14.) And that all wicked lewdness and fleshly filthiness, contrary to just and wholesome (civil) laws, ought to be punished according to the nature of the offenses; and this without respect of any persons, religion, or profession whatsoever; and that we and all men are obliged by Gospel rules to be subject to the higher powers, to

* This must not be confounded with another and better known insurrection headed by this same Venner, soon after the accession of Charles II, of which more will be said further on.

† Compare the article in the *Independent* of September 13, 1883, with Carlyle's "Cromwell," Vol. II, pp. 94, 281. See, also, Neal's "History of Puritans," IV, 278-284.

obey magistrates. (Titus iii, 1.) And to *submit to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake*, as saith Peter ii, 13. But in case the civil powers do or shall at any time impose things about matters of religion, which we through conscience to God can not actually obey, then we, with Peter, also do say, that we ought (in such cases) to obey God rather than men (Acts v, 29), and accordingly do hereby declare our whole, and holy intent and purpose, that (through the help of grace) we will not yield, nor (in such cases) in the least actually obey them; yet humbly purposing (in the Lord's strength) patiently to suffer whatsoever shall be inflicted upon us for our occasional forbearance. . . . Moreover we do utterly, and from our very hearts, in the Lord's fear, declare against all those wicked and devilish reports and reproaches falsely cast upon us, as though some of us (in and about the city of London) had lately gotten knives, hooked knives, and the like, and great store of arms besides what was given forth by order of Parliament, intending to cut the throats of such as were contrary minded to us in matters of religion, and that many such knives and arms for the carrying on some secret design hath been found in some of our houses by search; we say, from truth of heart, in the Lord's fear, that we do utterly abhor and abominate the thoughts thereof, and much more the actions; and do hereby challenge both city and country (in our innocence herein), as being not able to prove the things whereof they accuse us; and do for evermore declare the inventors of such reports to be liars and wicked devisers of mischief and corrupt designs. God that is above all will justify our innocence herein, who well knows our integrity in what we here declare. The Lord lay it not to their charge."*

The same year in which these words were written Charles Stuart was brought back with great rejoicing to the throne of his fathers. The Baptists must have seen in this event the death knell of their hopes of religious liberty, yet it does not appear that they raised voice or hand against the new king, though they were far from trusting his smooth words and promises, never meant to be kept, of toleration.† He was hardly seated on his throne when Venner and a

* "A BRIEF CONFESSION OR DECLARATION OF FAITH set forth by many of us, who are (falsely) called Anabaptists, to inform all men (in these days of scandal and reproach) of our innocent belief and practice; for which we are not only resolved to suffer persecution, to the loss of our goods, but also life itself, rather than to decline the same." Subscribed by certain elders, deacons, and brethren (to the number of forty), met at London, in March, 1660, and owned and approved by more than twenty thousand." (Crosby, II, pp. 76-90.)

† Crosby, II, pp. 19-32.

band of Fifth Monarchists and other irreconcilables made an insurrection whose object was the dethronement of the new monarch and the setting up of the kingdom of Christ on earth. It has been lately attempted to connect Baptists with this movement and the stale slanders of the time which accused them of complicity in this and every other disturbance that occurred, have been revived with great gusto.* Beyond these slanders there is not a particle of evidence that any Baptists took part in this insurrection; and evidence that they did not we have in their protest made at the time, and in the conclusion of every candid Pedobaptist historian who has carefully gone over the facts.† One of the documents produced by this affair was "The Humble Apology of Some Commonly-called Anabaptists," bearing date 1660. After protesting that their souls abhor the doctrines and bloody practices imputed to them, they say:

"Yet we can not imagine a reason why their bloody tenents and tragical actings should reflect upon those of our persuasion, the persons not being of our belief or practice about baptism; but, to the best of our information, they were all (except one) assertors of infant baptism, and never had communion with us in our assemblies. Nor hath there been any correspondence or converse between us; but, contrarywise, in their meetings they have inveighed bitterly against us as worshipers of the beast, because of our constant declaring against their conceited, wild interpretations of dark prophecies and enthusiastical impulses, and professed and practiced our duty of subjection to the civil magistracy.

"And it is notoriously known the very same persons, or at least the

* How well a slander will live is shown by the fact that Haydn's "Dictionary of Dates" (which can not be supposed to be inspired by any animus against Baptists) says, under the head of "Anabaptists," that this insurrection was made by "about eighty Anabaptists, . . . headed by their preacher, Thomas Venner, a wine cooper."

† Thus Rev. Roswell D. Hitchcock, D. D., now president of the Union Theological Seminary, and for many years professor of Ecclesiastical History in that institution, says: "The Independents, Baptists, and Quakers formally disclaimed all sympathy with the insurgents, yet were made to suffer odium and civil hardships in consequence of the movement."

It will not be the fault of some writers of to-day if the "odium" is not made perpetual, though happily "civil hardships" are now out of the question.

leaders,* and the most of them, formerly advanced their pretended standard of Jesus Christ, as much against us as against any others. And it is as publicly known that even in this, their rebellion, such of us as were called thereunto (which were many) were ready to hazard our lives to suppress them."†

Three other documents, similar in tone and equally emphatic in protest, are given in the volume of "Confessions of Faith," to which frequent reference has already been made.‡ But these explicit and repeated declarations produced no effect either upon the king or upon the majority of Parliament. It was predetermined that all Nonconformists should be persecuted, and Baptists in particular; and persecuted they were with great severity. || They were no longer burned at the stake, but they were fined and imprisoned without mercy. Bunyan, lying for twelve long years in Bedford

*This disposes of the *Independent's* confident assertion that there is no evidence that Venner was not a Baptist. At the end of a copy of these apologies Crosby found a short-hand note to this effect: "Mr. Jeffrey, preaching soon after, declared to his congregation that Venner should say, that he believed there was not one Baptist amongst them, and that if they succeeded, the Baptists should know that infant baptism was an ordinance of Jesus Christ. Mr. Grovener was present at his meeting-house in Coleman Street, and heard him say this; from whose mouth, says the writer, I had this account." This anonymous contemporary testimony is offered for what it may seem to be worth.

†Crosby, II, 38, 39.

‡Pp. 353-360. To these should be added "The humble petition and representation of the sufferings of several peaceable and innocent subjects," etc. 1660. "Tracts on Liberty of Conscience," pp. 291-308.

||In spite of the fact that his name was signed to the protest from which the foregoing quotation is made, William Kiffin was singled out for special persecution. He was arrested not less than four times during the four years following the Restoration, on the charge of being concerned in treasonable plots. In each case his innocence was vindicated. The object of such persecution in his case was probably blackmail, as he was rich and able to pay handsomely for his release. It is well known that the Merry Monarch did not disdain to levy this sort of blackmail in person, instead of deputing the work to his underlings. On one occasion he demanded of Kiffin the loan of £40,000. With ready wit his Anabaptist subject replied, "That he could not possibly *lend* his majesty so large a sum, but if his majesty would honor him by accepting £10,000 as a *gift*, he was very welcome to it." The king accepted the offer, and, as Mr. Kiffin used to say, when he told the story, "he saved £30,000 by his liberality." See Ivimey's "Life of Mr. William Kiffin," ch. iv. London, 1833.

jail for no worse crime than the preaching of the Gospel without episcopal "orders," is the best known, but by no means the worst, case of persecution during this reign. Nevertheless Baptists did not falter. They were constant in affirming the truths they believed to be taught in the Word of God, and as one of the chief of these that Christian men ought to have all charity towards those who differed from them in belief. Among the individual expressions in favor of complete liberty in matters of religion, may be specified the "Plea for Toleration," by John Sturghion,* and a tract signed by seven Baptists, entitled "Zion's Groans for Her Distressed, or, Sober Endeavors to Prevent Innocent Blood."†

It is unnecessary to do more than chronicle the titles of these works to indicate that the Baptists continued their advocacy of religious liberty when others faltered and proved unfaithful to the sacred cause.

Much more important than these tracts are two Confessions of Faith issued in the following decade. In 1677 was published the first edition of that Confession which is commonly known as the "Confession of 1689," that being the year in which it was republished and given a wider circulation than it had before won.‡ It is this Confession that, under the name of the "Philadelphia Confession," is still the basis of the articles of faith professed by the greater number of Baptist Churches in the United States, as well as in England. Chapters xxi and xxiv, of this document, are entitled "Of Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience" and "Of the Civil Magistrate." This Confession is, however, so well known and so easily accessible that to quote these long chapters would be a wanton waste of space. The Confession of the General Baptists in the following year (1678), under the title of "An Orthodox Creed, or a Protestant Confession of Faith," is less known, and

* "Tracts on Liberty of Conscience," pp. 311-341. Date, 1661.

† Crosby, II, 98-144. Same date.

‡ Crosby, II, compare pp. 312 and 317.

it is worth while to quote its articles bearing on this question:

"XLV ARTICLE. OF THE CIVIL MAGISTRATE.

"The supreme Lord and King of all the world hath ordained civil magistrates to be under him over the people for his own glory and the public good. And the office of a magistrate may be accepted of and executed by Christians, when lawfully called thereunto; and God hath given the power of the sword into the hands of all lawful magistrates for the defense and encouragement of them that do well, and for the punishment of evil doers, and for the maintenance of justice and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each kingdom and commonwealth, and they may wage war upon just and necessary occasions. And subjection in the Lord ought to be yielded to the magistrates in all lawful things commanded by them, for conscience' sake, with prayers for them for a blessing upon them, paying all lawful and reasonable customs and tribute to them, for the assisting of them against foreign, domestical, and potent enemies.

"XLVI ARTICLE. OF LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE.

"The Lord Jesus Christ, who is King of kings, and Lord of all by purchase, and is Judge of quick and dead, is the only Lord of conscience, having a peculiar right so to be; he having died for that end, to take away the guilt, and to destroy the filth of sin, that keeps the consciences of all men in thralldom and bondage till they are set free by his special grace. And, therefore, he would not have the consciences of men in bondage to or imposed upon by any usurpation, tyranny, or command whatsoever, contrary to his revealed will in his Word, which is the only rule he hath left for the consciences of all men to be ruled and regulated and guided by, through the assistance of his Spirit. And, therefore, the obedience to any command or decree, that is not revealed in or consonant to his Word, in the holy oracles of Scripture, is a betraying of the true liberty of conscience. And the requiring of an implicit faith and an absolute blind obedience, destroys liberty of conscience and reason also, it being repugnant to both; and that no good end whatsoever, by any man, can make that action, obedience, or practice lawful and good, that is not grounded in or upon the authority of Holy Scripture or right reason agreeable thereto."*

The events of the reign of James II were favorable to the development of a spirit of toleration among Protestants, who were driven into a closer political and religious alliance by the fear of Catholic supremacy. The revolution that overthrew James placed on the throne the

* "Confessions of Faith," pp. 164, 165.

Prince of Orange, the descendant of that heroic leader of the Netherlands in their long struggle to throw off the yoke of Catholic Spain—the first ruler in modern history who was statesman enough and Christian enough to incorporate the principle of religious liberty into his country's laws. Thanks to William III, the Act of Toleration was passed in 1689, which, though a mass of absurdities and inconsistencies when carefully analyzed,* was yet a measure of practical justice to the majority and of great relief to all. Even then Catholics and Jews were exempted from its provisions, and so enlightened and liberal-minded men as Tillotson† and Locke‡ protested against granting toleration to them. But from that day the grosser forms of persecution ceased forever as regarded all Protestant bodies, though the principle of complete religious liberty has never yet found general acceptance in England.

It is the glory of Baptists that they were the first to advocate religious liberty for all men, and that at no period of their history have they ceased to advocate it. Their clear vision of this great truth was due, first of all, to their acceptance of the Scriptures as the only and all-sufficient rule of faith and practice. The corollary of this doctrine was the rejection of all human authority and the assertion of the right of every man to interpret the Scriptures for himself, as enlightened by the Spirit of God. That they were persecuted for these views only strengthened their convictions, which, in the end, have become the truisms of every civilized community. *Magna est veritas, et prævalebit.*

*See Macaulay's scathing criticism in his History, IV, p. 232. (Riverside edition.)

†Works. Sermon preached before House of Commons November 5, 1678.

‡See first letter "On Toleration."

THE OPPOSITION OF PRESBYTERIANS AND INDEPENDENTS.

THE history of the English Baptists and their struggle for complete liberty of conscience for all men can not be fully told without a glance at the attitude maintained towards that principle by other Non-conformists. Professor Charles A. Briggs has seen fit to make this claim for the denomination to which he belongs: "They [the Presbyterians] were not a whit behind the Independents and Baptists in forbearance and charity. . . . The one sought peace, charity, and the unity of Christ's Church. The other sought sectarian strife, division of Churches and families, and toleration in the exercise of all kinds of intolerance."* Dr. Briggs is known to have made a special study of the Puritan divines and of the history of Presbyterianism in the seventeenth century. To question the statements of a specialist requires some courage; nevertheless, I do not hesitate to assert that each several statement in the above brief extract is absolutely untrue.† It has already been shown

* *Presbyterian Review*, Vol. IV, page 363.

† Nothing is further from my intention than to express any doubt of Professor Briggs's veracity. The trouble with him is that his prepossessions are so violently in favor of Presbyterianism that he is not able to see any evidence that would invalidate his conclusions. It ought, perhaps, to be conceded that a single one of his statements is true: the Presbyterians *did* seek "the unity of Christ's Church." So have all persecutors sought unity. In fact, persecution is nothing more than seeking the unity of Christ's Church by means of imposing physical pains and penalties upon all whose consciences impel them to separate from the faith and practice of the dominant party in State and Church.

that Baptists did not demand "toleration in the exercise of all kinds of intolerance," but merely asserted the right of every man to worship God without molestation according to the dictates of his own conscience, so long (and only so long) as he did not interfere with the right of every other man to do the same. In this paper I shall attempt to show that the Independents were so far in the rear of the Baptists as to favor only a limited toleration, while the Presbyterians would tolerate none that were unable to accept the entire Presbyterian scheme of belief and polity. These facts will be established by public documents and by the writings of Presbyterian and independent divines of acknowledged eminence. Most of these documents are vouched for by Non-conformist writers; in the few cases where they are taken at second hand from Baptist sources, that fact will be carefully noted.

THE PRESBYTERIANS OF SCOTLAND.

The Presbyterian system has had its fullest and freest development in Scotland, and to that realm we must turn if we would learn what Presbyterianism really is. The first fruit of the Reformation of which John Knox was the head, was what has since been known as the First Scotch Confession.* Article XXIV of this Confession is as follows:

"OF THE CHIEFE CIVILE MAGISTRATE.

"We confesse and acknowledge Empyres, Kingdomes, Dominions, and Citties to be distincted and ordained be God; . . . Mairover, to Kings, Princes, Rulers, and Magistrates, wee affirme that chieflie and most principallie the conservation and purgation of the Religioun apperteinis; so that not onlie they are appointed for civill policie, bot also for maintenance of the trew Religioun, and for suppressing of Idolatrie and Superstitioun whatsoever, as in *David, Josaphat*.

*THE CONFESSION of the Faith and Doctrine belevit and professit be the Protestants of SCOTLAND, exhibitit to the Estaitis of the same in Parliament, and be their publick Votis authorisit, as a Doctrine groundit upon the infallibil Worde of God, August, 1560. And afterwards stablished and publicklie confirmed be sundrie Acts of Parliaments, and of lawful General Assemblies.

Ezechias, Josias, and utheris highlie commended for their zeale in that case may be espyed."*

Conformably to the provisions of this Article a coronation oath was framed in 1567, in which the sovereign swore, among other things, to "maintain the true religion of Jesus Christ; the preaching of his holy Word, and the due and right administration of the sacraments, now received and preached within this realm;" to "abolish and gainstand all false religion, contrary to the same;" "and out of their lands and empires to be careful to root out all heretics and enemies to the true worship of God, that shall be convicted by the true Kirk of God of the foresaid crimes."† In 1580 these principles received additional confirmation in the adoption of the National Covenant, which was subscribed by the King and Estates, and ordered, in 1640, by the Parliament to be subscribed by every subject, "under all civil pains." The subscribers put their names to this solemn oath:

"Promising and swearing be the GREAT NAME OF THE LORD OUR GOD, That we sall contenow in the obedience of the Doctrine and Discipline of this Kirk, and sall defend the same according to our vocation and power, all the dayes of our lyves; under the pains contened in the law, and danger baith of bodie and saul in the day of Godis fearfull Judgment."‡

By Act of Parliament, therefore, every subject was required to make oath that he would hold a system of doc-

* Schaff's "Creeds of Christendom," Vol. III, pp. 474-476.

† Quoted in "The Principles of the Westminster Confession Persecuting," by William Marshall, D. D., page 29. Edinburgh. 1873. As I shall have frequent occasion to refer to this book, I may say here that Dr. Marshall is a member of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and writes his book with the avowed purpose of inducing his Church to repudiate the persecuting principles of the Westminster Standards. His Church has introduced into its formulas this clause: "It being understood that you are not required to approve of any thing in these documents that teaches, or is supposed to teach, compulsory or persecuting and intolerant principles in religion." (McClintock and Strong's "Cyclopedia," Vol. VIII, page 519.) Dr. Marshall holds that this does not meet the case; that the Westminster Standards plainly do teach persecuting principles; and that the United Presbyterian Church ought to strike them out of the Confession, and not merely grant its ministers a dispensation from believing them.

‡ Schaff, "Creeds of Christendom," Vol. III, page 483.

trine to which he might have insuperable objections, and that he would persecute all who refused to subscribe the same! Surely the ingenuity of man never contrived a more unchristian law than this, unless we except the Solemn League and Covenant,* adopted in 1643 by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and ratified at once by the Convention of the Estates. The subscribers of this Covenant pledge themselves to "endeavor to bring the Churches of God in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of Church government, directory for worship and catechising." Likewise, "without respect of persons [to] endeavor the extirpation of popery, prelacy, . . . superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness;" and followed these not ambiguous pledges with the following clause:

"IV. We shall, also, with all faithfulness, endeavor the discovery of all such as have been or shall be incendiaries, malignants or evil instruments, by hindering the reformation of religion, dividing the King from his People, or one of the kingdoms from another, or making any faction and parties amongst the people contrary to this League and Covenant; that they may be brought to public trial, and receive condign punishment, as the degree of their offenses shall require or deserve, or the supreme judicatories of both kingdoms respectively, or others having power from them for that effect, shall judge convenient."

This also was ordered to be sworn to and subscribed by all subjects "under pain, of such as refuse, to be esteemed and punished as enemies to religion, His Majesty's honor, and the peace of their kingdoms; and to have their goods and rents confiscate for the use of the public; and that they shall not brook nor enjoy any benefit, place, nor office within this kingdom."†

*The full title is: "THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT for Reformation and Defense of Religion, the Honor and Happiness of the King, and the Peace and Safety of the Three Kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland." (See Schaff's "Creeds of Christendom," Vol. I, pp. 690, 691.)

†Quoted from "Collection of Laws in Favor of the Reformation of Scotland," by Marshall, page 63. Compare John Hill Burton's "History

One more extract from the records of the Scotch Church will suffice. The Second Book of Discipline was agreed upon in the General Assembly of 1578, and contains the following passages:

"CHAPTER I. OF THE KIRK.

"The civill power sould command the spiritual to exercise and doe their office according to the Word of God. . . . The magistrate neither aucht to preich, minister the sacramentis, nor execute the censuris of the Kirk, nor yet prescryve any rewl how it sould be done; bot command the ministeris to observe the rewl commandit in the Word, and punish the transgressouris be civill means. . . . The magistrate aucht to assist, mentain, and fortifie the jurisdiction of the Kirk.

"CHAPTER X. OF THE OFFICE OF A CHRISTIAN MAGISTRATE IN THE KIRK.

"It pertainis to the office of a Christian magistrat to assist and fortify the godly proceedings of the Kirk in all behalves; and namely, to see that the publique estait, and ministrie thereof, be mainteinit and susteinit as it apperteins, according to Godis Word. . . . To assist and manteine the discipline of the Kirk; and punish them civilly, that will not obey the censure of the same, without confounding alwayis the ane jurisdiction with the other.

The extant writings of the chief divines of the Scotch Church confirm the doctrine of the standards in no uncertain terms. Whole pages might be cited in proof of this statement, but a few brief quotations must suffice. No one will dispute the right of John Knox to speak for Scotch Presbyterianism, and these are his words:

"None provoking the people to idolatry ought to be exempted from the punishment of death. . . . The whole tribes did in very dede execute that sharp judgment against the tribe of Benjamin for a less offence than idolatrie. And the same ought to be done where-soever Christ Jesus and his Evangiel is so received in any realme, province, or city, that the magistrates and people have solemnly avowed and promised to defend the same, as under King Edward of late days was done in England. In such places, I say, it is not only lawful to punish to the death such as labor to subvert the true religion, but the magistrates and people are bound to do so unless they will provoke the wrath of God against themselves."*

of Scotland," Vol. VII, page 81. Burton says: "Both parties had a hearty horror of the new doctrine of toleration." (Page 324.)

* "History of Reformation in Scotland," pp. 264, 265.

Samuel Rutherford is a name of highest rank among the Scotch Presbyterians of the seventeenth century, and he was a worthy follower of Knox—witness these words from his “Free Disputation against Pretended Liberty of Conscience:”

“Such opinions and practices as make an evident schism in a Church, and set up two distinct Churches, and pretending to different institutions of Christ, of which the one must, by the nature of their principles, labor for the destruction of the other, can not be tolerated.”*

Robert Baillie was one of the Commissioners from the Scotch Church to the Westminster Assembly of divines, and his representative character can not be denied. In his “Letters and Journals” there is a full history of the struggle between the Presbyterians and the Independents over the question of toleration, both within and without the Assembly, from which the following significant quotations will indicate the tone of the whole:

“God permitts these gracious men [Goodwin and the Independents] to be many wayes unhappie instruments: as yett their pride continues; but we are hopefull the Parliament will not own their way so much as to tolerate it, if once they found themselves masters. For the time they are loath to cast them off, and to put their partie to a despaire, lest they desert them.” Letter of August 10, 1644—“Our next worke is, to give advyce what to doe for the suppressing of Anabaptists, Antinomians, and other sectaries.” August 28—“We spent a number of sessions on some propositions of advyce to the Parliament for suppressing Antinomians, Anabaptists, and these who preaches (*sic*) a libertie for all religions.” September 16—“The Assemblie having put the Independents to shew what positively is their judgment in things controverted, we have been quyte of their cumber these six or seven weeks. Every day this month we have been expecting their positive tenets, but as yet we have heard nothing of them; only in their sermons in the City they are deviating more and more towards old and new errorrs, especiallie libertie of conscience; Their wayes are daylie more and more dislyked.” May 5, 1645—“Many of them [Independents] preach, and some print, a libertie of conscience, at least the great equitie of a toleration for all religions; that every man should be permitted without any feare, so much as of discountenance from the magistrate, to pro-

* Quoted by Marshall, page 225. The very title of Rutherford's book is significant, and makes citations from it almost unnecessary.

fesse publicklye his conscience, were he never so erroneous, and also live according thereunto, if he trouble not the publick peace by any seditious or wicked practice."* December 27, 1644.

But enough, and more than enough, of quotations like these. Surely, no scholar who has an atom of reputation to lose will venture to deny, in the face of the proofs that have been produced, that the Scotch Presbyterians, at least, advocated persecuting principles of the plainest kind.† Were it worth the while equally satisfactory proofs might be produced that these principles were carried out into appropriate action.

THE ENGLISH PRESBYTERIANS.

In weight of character and extent of learning the Westminster Assembly of Divines was the greatest synod ever held by any Church. From the moment that it assembled (July 1, 1643) it was evident that the great majority of its members, though men of the most exemplary piety and mighty in the Scriptures, had yet to learn one of the cardinal principles of the Gospel of Christ. Their zeal for the truth, as they understood it, was so consuming that even to speak of tolerating what seemed to them to be deadly error was an impiety. This spirit manifested itself in their first sessions, and continued without softening to the end. Some of the modern defenders of these divines have thought it necessary to apologize for the very principles in which they gloried—to maintain, against the plainest facts, that they favored a toleration that was a stench in the nostrils of every man of them. From the public acts of the Assembly, as well as from the writings and addresses of the more prominent members, it clearly appears that toleration

* See his "Letters and Journals," Vol. II, *passim*. In another of his writings, Baillie says: "Liberty of conscience and toleration of all, or any religion, is so prodigious an impiety that this religious Parliament can not but abhor the very naming of it." From the epistle dedicatory of his "Dissuasive from the Errors of the Time."

† The words of Principal Lee are frank and satisfactory: "It must be admitted that they [our Reformers] thought it criminal to tolerate error." "Lectures on the History of the Church of Scotland," Vol. I, 226.

was never in their thoughts. He who attempts to maintain the contrary must be prepared first to prove that black is white, and that No means Yes.

In August, 1643, the Solemn League and Covenant was adopted by the General Assembly of Scotland, sent to the Westminster Assembly, and by it was approved after a debate of several days. On the 21st of September Parliament ordered it to be published and subscribed throughout England, and this was done wherever its authority extended. As we have already seen, this covenant made persecution a religious duty; and this beginning was auspicious the key-note of the Assembly's entire history. Before going into the details of that history let us examine the teachings of this body as set forth in its own solemn declarations. The two chief documents which its long sessions produced, and in which the Presbyterian faith is officially set forth, were the Confession of Faith and the Larger Catechism. What have they to say with reference to men's liberty in matters of religion? Let the following extracts from the Confession answer:

"CHAPTER XX. OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE.

"2. God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to his Word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship. So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also.

"4. And because the power which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; they who upon pretense of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God. And for their publishing of such opinions, or maintaining of such practices as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity, whether concerning faith, worship, or conversation; or to the power of godliness; or such erroneous opinions or practices as, either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the Church; they may be lawfully

called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the Church, and by the power of the Civil Magistrate.*

"CHAPTER XXIII. OF THE CIVIL MAGISTRATE.

"3. The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and Sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his duty to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline be prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God."†

There is no need to comment on these extracts; let the reader carefully weigh each phrase in its obvious and unstrained meaning, and decide for himself whether the Westminster Confession teaches persecution. To the same effect speaks the Larger Catechism. Question 109 is, "What are the sins forbidden in the second commandment?" And the answer is, "All devising, counseling, commanding, using,

* The American Revision, as held by the Presbyterian Church in the United States, erases the words "and by the power of the civil magistrate."

† This section reads thus in the revised Confession of the American Presbyterians: "Civil magistrates may not assume to themselves the administration of the Word and the Sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, or, in the least, interfere in matters of faith. Yet, as nursing fathers, it is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the Church of our common Lord, without giving the preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest, in such a manner that all ecclesiastical persons whatever shall enjoy the full, free, and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred functions, without violence or danger. And, as Jesus Christ hath appointed a regular government and discipline in his Church, no law of any commonwealth should interfere with, let, or hinder, the due exercise thereof, among the voluntary members of any denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and belief. It is the duty of civil magistrates to protect the person and good name of all their people, in such an effectual manner as that no person be suffered, either upon pretense of religion or infidelity, to offer any indignity, violence, abuse, or injury to any other person whatsoever; and to take order, that all religious and ecclesiastical assemblies be held without molestation or disturbance." No one who subscribes this statement can possibly subscribe that of the original Confession. The recital of the former is the sufficient condemnation of the latter.

and anywise approving any religious worship not instituted by God himself, tolerating a false religion," etc.* The duties imposed by the commandment are further defined to be "the disapproving, detesting, opposing all false worship; and, according to each one's place and calling, removing it and all monuments of idolatry."† How could the duty of persecution be more plainly taught than in these words?

The history of the Assembly's proceedings, when examined in detail, shows beyond cavil the sense these declarations were intended to bear. It is matter of undisputed record that in 1644 the Independents, seeing that a Presbyterian form of government would certainly be determined upon by the Assembly, and confirmed by Parliament, petitioned for the toleration of their own separate congregations. The Assembly were bent on uniformity; and for months the point was obstinately debated on both sides.‡

While the question was pending, violent protests were forwarded from the Scotch Presbyterians, who opposed the toleration demanded on the express ground that the Covenant forbade the toleration of schismatics and heretics.|| At a meeting held December 16, 1645, the whole body of London ministers drew up a letter to the Assembly, in which they used this language:

"We can not dissemble, how upon the forementioned grounds [the mischievous consequences that would result] we detest and abhor the much-endavored toleration. Our bowels are stirred within us, and we could even drown ourselves in tears, when we call to mind how long and sharp a travail this kingdom hath been in for many years together, to bring forth that blessed fruit of a pure and perfect reformation; and now at last, after all our prayers and dolours and expectations, this real and thorough reformation is in danger of being strangled

*The offensive clause is omitted by the American Church.

† These words are unchanged in the American revised form.

‡ Compare Lightfoot's "Journal of the Assembly," November 19, 1644, *et al.* See, also, Neal, Vol. III, pp. 257-261; Hanbury, Vol. II, pp. 102, 230.

|| Neal, Vol. III, page 262.

in the birth by a lawless toleration, that strives to be brought forth before it.”*

A temporary stay of proceedings was produced by Cromwell's procuring the passage in September, 1644, of the following in the House of Commons:

“*Ordered*, That the Committee of Lords and Commons appointed to treat with the Commissioners of Scotland and the Committee of the Assembly, do take into consideration the differences in opinion of the members of the Assembly in point of Church government, and do endeavour a union if it be possible; and, in case that can not be done, do endeavour the finding out some ways how far tender consciences, who can not in all things submit to the common Rule which shall be established may be borne with, according to the Word, and as may stand with the publick peace, that so the proceedings of the Assembly may not be so much retarded.”†

The bitter complaints of this action, and of the Independents generally, that fill the letters of Baillie at this time, show how the thorough-going Presbyterians gnashed their teeth at having their persecuting tendencies restrained by even so slight a bond as this.‡ In 1648, however, the Presbyterian party had gained the upper hand so completely in both Assembly and Parliament that they felt strong enough to carry out their views with stringency. Not only did the Assembly decide finally against even a limited toleration, but Parliament purposed to translate this decision

* Quoted by Crosby, Vol. I, page 188, and confirmed by Neal, Vol. III, page 327. In connection with this protest the following brief extract from a petition from the lord mayor, alderman, and common council of London, dated May 26, 1646, may be of interest. They ask “that some strict and speedy course might be taken for the suppressing all private and separate congregations; that all Anabaptists, Brownists, Heretics, Schismatics, Blasphemers, and all other Sectaries, who conform not to the publick discipline established, or to be established by Parliament, may be fully declared against, and some effectual course settled for proceeding against such persons; and that no person disaffected to presbyterial government, set forth or to be set forth by Parliament, may be employed in any place of public trust.” Crosby, Vol. I, page 184.

† Masson's “Life of Milton,” Vol. III, page 169.

‡ Baillie's “Letters and Journals,” Vol. II, pp. 226, 229, 231, 236, 237, *et passim*.

into statute. On May 2d of that year there was actually passed an "Ordinance concerning Heresy and Blasphemy," in which it was provided that—

"All persons who shall willingly maintain, publish, or defend, by preaching or writing, the following heresies with obstinacy, shall, upon complaint and proof by the oaths of two witnesses, before two justices of the peace, or confession of the party, be committed to prison, without bail or mainprise, till the next gaol delivery; and in case the indictment shall then be found, and the party upon his trial shall not abjure his said error, and his defence and maintenance of the same, he shall suffer the pains of death, as in case of a felony, without benefit of clergy; and if he recant or abjure, he shall remain in prison till he find sureties that he will not maintain the same heresies or errors any more; but if he relapse, and is convicted a second time, he shall suffer death as before."

Eight heresies are enumerated, among which are the denial of the existence of God or of the Trinity, that the Scriptures are the Word of God, and the resurrection of the dead. Sixteen other heresies are enumerated in the Ordinance, among which are "that the baptism of infants is unlawful and void, and that such persons ought to be baptized again," concerning the holders of which it is more mercifully enacted that:

"Whosoever shall maintain or defend them shall, upon conviction, by the oaths of two witnesses, or by his own confession before the justices of the peace, be ordered to renounce the said error or errors in the publick congregation of the parish from whence the complain comes, or where the offence was committed; and in case of refusal he shall be committed to prison till he find sureties that he shall not publish or maintain the said error or errors any more."

Well may Neal, the learned and zealous historian of the Puritans, from whose pages I copy the above extracts, say of this Ordinance: "This was one of the most shocking laws I have met with in restraint of religious liberty, and shows that the governing Presbyterians would have made a terrible use of their power had they been supported by the sword of the civil magistrate."* Well might Milton break

* "History of the Puritans," Vol. III, page 419-421. See also Crosby, Vol. I, page 199-205. *Per contra*, a recent apologist of the Assembly goes

forth in his memorable protest, moved by a righteous indignation that could not find expression in honeyed words or courteous phrases:

"Dare ye for this adjure the civil sword
To force our consciences, that Christ set free,
And ride us with a classic hierarchy?"

And with bitter truth he added,

"New Presbyterian is but old Priest writ large."

Not in vain, as we have seen, was his subsequent appeal to Cromwell for protection from these wolves in sheep's clothing, who had broken down one tyranny only to erect on its base another more odious—

"Peace hath her victories
No less renowned than War; new foes arise,
Threat'ning to bind our souls with secular chains;
Help us to save free conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves, whose Gospel is their maw."

Nothing but the overthrow of the Long Parliament, and with it the Presbyterian domination, prevented a more tyrannous and implacable persecution than any that disgraces the fair page of England's annals.

The writings of the Presbyterians at this time, and the sermons preached by the most renowned divines before the House of Commons, are full of denunciations of the idea of toleration. The more zealous of the Assembly and of the ministry were trying to induce the lukewarm to perform their duties according to the Solemn League and Covenant, by which they had bound themselves to extirpate all heresy. It is not for being faithful to their avowed principles that these Presbyterians are to be blamed, but for holding the principles. A few only of the numerous accessions so far as to say: "The Ordinance against blasphemies and heresies, harsh and cruel as it seems to us, was not a tightening, but a relaxation, of the old law, and the restraint without law formerly practiced, but put in temporary abeyance by the abolition of the Court of High Commission and of the office of bishop." Dr. Alexander F. Mitchell's Baird lecture on "The Westminster Assembly," page 492. Compare pages 203-211.

sible extracts from the writings of that day need be quoted here to establish my point. Some of the more characteristic are these:

"I humbly beseech the Parliament seriously to consider the depths of Satan in this design of Toleration: how this is now his last plot and design, and by it would undermine and frustrate the whole work of Reformation intended. 'Tis his masterpiece for England; and, for effecting it, he comes and moves, not in Prelates and Bishops, not in furious Anabaptists, etc., but in holy men, excellent preachers, moderate and fair men, not for a toleration of heresies and gross opinions, but an 'allowance of a latitude to some differences with peaceableness.' . . . In a word, could the Devil effect a Toleration, he would think he had gained well by the Reformation, and made a good exchange of the Hierarchy to have a Toleration for it."*

"I could wish, with all my heart, there were a public disputation, even in the point of pedobaptism and dipping, between some of the Anabaptists and some of our ministers. But if, upon disputation and debate, the Anabaptists should be found in an error, as I am confident they would, that then the Parliament should forbid all dipping, and take some severe course with all dippers, as the senate of Zurich did."†

"If you do not labor according to your duty and power to suppress the errors and heresies that are spread in the kingdom, all these errors are your errors, and these heresies are your heresies; they are your sins, and God calls for a Parliamentary repentance from you for them this day. You are the Anabaptists, you are the Antinomians, and it is you that hold all religions should be tolerated."‡

"The divisions and havock of the Church is our calamity; we intended not to dig down the banks or pull up the hedge, and lay all waste and common, when we desired the prelates' tyranny to cease [*i. e.*, while we demanded liberty for ourselves we had no intention of conceding it to others]. My judgment in that much disputed point of liberty of religion I have always freely made known. I abhor unlimited liberty and toleration of all, and think myself easily able to prove the wickedness of it."||

"That which is a plain breach of the sixth commandment, '*Thou shalt not kill*,' is no ordinance of God, but a most heinous sin; but the

* Quoted by Masson, "Life of Milton," Vol. III, page 133, from the "Antapologia" of Thomas Edwards. July, 1644.

† Quoted from the "Gangræna" of Mr. Edwards, lecturer of Christ Church. By Crosby, Vol. I, page 183.

‡ Sermon of Dr. Calamy before the House of Commons, October 22, 1644. Quoted by Ivimey, Vol. I, page 168. Compare other extracts from like sermons as given by Marshall, page 76.

|| From Richard Baxter's "Plain Scripture Proof of Infant Church Membership and Baptism." Quoted by Ivimey, Vol. I, page 169.

ordinary practice of baptizing over head and ears in cold water, as necessary, is a plain breach of the sixth commandment—therefore, it is no ordinance of God, but a heinous sin. And, as Mr. Cradock shows in his book of 'Gospel Liberty,' the magistrate ought to *restrain* it, to save the lives of his subjects. . . . And if those who would make it men's religion to murder themselves, and urge it upon their consciences as their duty, are *not to be suffered* in a commonwealth, any more than highway murderers, then judge how these Anabaptists, that teach the necessity of such dipping are to be suffered."*

"A toleration would be putting a sword into a madman's hand; a cup of poison into the hand of a child; a letting loose of madmen with firebrands in their hands, and appointing a city of refuge in men's consciences for the devil to fly to; a laying a stumbling-block before the blind; a proclaiming liberty to the wolves to come into Christ's fold to prey upon the lambs; neither would it be to provide for tender consciences, but to take away all conscience."†

It is not necessary to quote farther from such ravings as these, nor could the most exacting demand more explicit proof of the persecuting principles of the English Presbyterians. To add to the mass of testimony already produced, from documents of unquestionable authenticity, though it were easy enough to do so, would be like painting the lily or gilding refined gold—a wasteful and ridiculous excess.

THE ENGLISH INDEPENDENTS.

It is a little difficult to determine just what view of religious liberty obtained among the English Independents. As we have already seen, Robert Browne held a view of the relations between the Church and the civil power that logic-

* From the same. Ivimey, Vol. I, page 193. In another chapter Baxter speaks of toleration as "soul-murder" and "the way to man's damnation." See, also, the article of Dr. Schaff on "The Development of Religious Freedom," in the *North American Review* for April, page 353. In this article, by the way, Dr. Schaff manages to accomplish the apparently impossible feat of writing a sketch of the struggle for religious liberty, without mentioning the part taken in it by the Baptists. In fact, the word "Baptist" occurs in the article but twice, once in mentioning "the Baptist colony of Rhode Island," and again in saying that persecution in Virginia was done away by the "combined influence of Dissenters (Presbyterians, Baptists, Quakers, Methodists), of liberal Episcopalians, and the deistic Jefferson."

† From "The Harmonious Consent of the Lancashire Ministers with Their Brethren in London," 1648. Quoted by Crosby, Vol. I, page 190.

ally involved complete religious liberty, though there is no explicit declaration in his writings for the toleration of Papists, Jews, and infidels. It is admitted on all hands, however, that his views did not take root among his co-laborers and successors. John Greenwood avowed very different sentiments:

"We grant that the Prince may command and compel subjects to the hearing of the public doctrine and prayer of the Church, but, to enter into covenant, or be received a member, it is to be done by doctrine, faith, and repentance; neither did the kings of Judah compel the priests to receive any uncircumcised or idolatrous into the fellowship of the Church. Faith is the gift of God, wrought by his Spirit and Word. The Prince may compel the means thereunto, but not enforce faith."*

The Ainsworth Confession speaks no less plainly when it says: "It is the duty of princes and magistrates to suppress and root out, by their authority, all false ministries, voluntary religions, and counterfeit worship of God; . . . yea, to enforce all their subjects, whether ecclesiastical and civil, to do their duties to God and men."† Hanbury says that this "must be considered as resulting from the spirit and condition of the age they lived in." Precisely; the plea is a valid one in mitigation; nevertheless it somehow happened that certain despised Anabaptists, like Smyth and Helwys and Busher, rose superior to "the spirit and condition of the age they lived in," while these Independents failed to do so. Henry Jacob agreed fully with Greenwood and Ainsworth:

"We hold that all Officers and Ministers of the Gospel ought to be subject to your high[ness] and to all and eurie your subordinate civill Magistrates. And that the civill Magistrates only oughte to be the Overseers of Provinces and Dioceses and of the severall Churches therein; and that it is a dutie enjoined them by God, and which your Ma[jesty] should, by way of commission, impose vpon the Nobilities and Gentry in the severall Counties of your Kingdome; namely, to sit in commission, and to take notice of all misgovernment in persons ec-

* Hanbury, Vol. I, page 68.

† Article XXXIX of "The Confession of Faith of Certain English People Living in the Low Countries, Exiled," 1598. Hanbury, Vol. I, page 97.

clesiastique committed either in the course of their life or teaching; and so to procede accordingly to censure and redresse."*

It would be easy to multiply extracts like the above, but further proof is unnecessary to show that the early Independents differed widely from Browne on this point. But did more liberal views prevail at a later date? There is no good reason to believe that these doctrines were essentially modified. As we have already seen, Baillie charged the Independents with advocating a universal toleration; it was a constant burden of his letters that the Independents wanted a "universall libertie for all religions."† But this is the accusation of a bitter opponent, who was bent on making them appear as odious as possible, and it must be taken with grains of allowance. Nothing that I have been able to find in the writings of this period (1643-1659) sustains this charge made by the Scotch divine. Professor Masson, who has made a thorough study of the literature of this period, says: "Care must be taken, however, not to credit the Apologists at this period with any notion of absolute or universal Toleration. They were far behind Mrs. Chidley or the old Baptists in their views. They were as yet but learners in the school of Toleration. Indulgence for *themselves* 'in some lesser differences,' and perhaps, also, for some of the more reputable of the other sects in *their* different 'lesser differences' was the sum of their published demand."‡ At the same time, one must confess that it is not easy to reconcile this conclusion with what the same author says of the theory advocated in the writings of John Goodwin: "Whatever minister or magistrate may do towards confuting and diminishing error, there is a point at which they must both stop. There is not to be a suppression of false religions, sects, and schisms, by fining, im-

* "Humble Supplication for Toleration," page 6, 1609. For this quotation and for several helpful suggestions relating to the Independent literature, I am indebted to the courtesy of the Rev. Henry M. Dexter, D. D.

† See "Letters and Journals," Vol. II, pp. 218, 230, 235, 259, 328, 361, etc., etc.

‡ "Life of Milton," Vol. III, page 111.

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prisoning, disfranchising, banishment, death, or any civil punishment whatsoever; and when it comes to that, they are all to be tolerated." If Goodwin taught this, he, at least, was not far from advocating complete religious liberty.* But there is no reason to believe that any other Independent writer ever went to any thing like this length.

The most explicit declaration of principles on this question belonging to this period, is that of John Cotton. Though he represented the views of New England rather than those of old England—the former being, in some respects, apparently the more stringent and illiberal of the two—his tract was printed in London, and probably expresses the view taken by most Independents. His opinion is given with all frankness in these terms:

"First. It is not lawfull to persecute any for conscience sake rightly informed, for, in persecuting such, Christ himself is persecuted in them. (Acts ix, 4.)

"Secondly. For an erroneous and blind conscience (even in fundamentall and weighty points) it is not lawfull to persecute any, untill after admonition once or twice, and so the apostle directeth (Titus iii, 10), and giveth the reason, that in fundamentall and principall points of doctrine or worship, the Word of God is so clear that he can not but be convinced in conscience of the dangerous error of his way, after once and twice admonition wisely and faithfully dispensed. And then, if any one persist, it is not out of conscience, but against his conscience, as the apostle saith, verse 11, he is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself; viz., of his own conscience: So that if such a man, after such admonition, shall still persist in the error of his ways, and be therefore punished, he is not persecuted for cause of conscience, but for sinning against his own conscience.

"Thirdly. In things of lesser moment, whether points of Doctrine or Worship, if a man hold them forth in a spirit of Christian meekness and love (though with zeal and constancy) he is not to be persecuted, but tolerated, till God may be pleased to manifest his truth to him. (Philippians iii, 17; Romans xiv, 1, 2, 3, 4.)

"Fourthly. But if a man hold forth or professe any error or false way, with a boisterous and arrogant spirit, to the disturbance of civill

* So far as I am able to discover there is not a copy of Goodwin's "Theomachia" or "Hagiomastix" in this country, and I am at present unable to verify Professor Masson's summary of his teaching.

peace, he may justly be punished according to the quality and measure of his disturbance caused by him."*

John Owen has been cited as an advocate of complete toleration, but I can not find that he deserves to be so ranked. In his collected works there is to be found an essay on "Two Questions Concerning the Power of the Supreme Magistrate," which contains some significant statements on this very point. Question one, is:

"Whether the supreme magistrate in a nation or commonwealth of men professing the religion of Jesus Christ, may or ought to exert his power legislative and executive, for the supportment, preservation, and furtherance of the profession of the faith and worship of God, and whether he may and ought to forbid, coerce, and restrain such principles and practices as are contrary to them and destructive of them?"

Both parts of this question are answered in the affirmative, on the ground that "it is incumbent on his [God's] worshipers, in their several capacities, to defend and further that worship which answers the light and knowledge they have of him." The opposite doctrine is declared to be contrary to the law of nations, contrary to the positive law of God (Deuteronomy xiv, 2, 3, 18, 19; xvi, 18-22), contrary to the example of all godly magistrates, accepted with God from the foundation of the world.

But enough of private writings; what do the public professions of the Independents declare as their belief on this subject? Let the Savoy Declaration, the authoritative standard of Independency, speak:

"CHAPTER XXIV. OF THE CIVIL MAGISTRATE.

"III. Although the magistrate is bound to encourage, promote, and protect the professors and profession of the gospel, and to manage and order co-civil administrations in a due subserviency to the interest of Christ in the world, and to that end to take care that men of corrupt minds and conversations do not licentiously publish and divulge blasphemy and errors, in their own nature subverting the faith and inevitably destroying the souls of them that receive them; yet in such differ-

* "The Controversie Concerning Liberty of Conscience in Matters of Religion, Truly Stated, and Distinctly and Plainly Handled," by Mr. John Cotton, of Boston, in New England. London, 1646, pp. 7, 8. For the loan of this rare tract I am indebted to the kindness of the Rev. Henry M. Dexter, D. D.

ences about the doctrines of the gospel, or ways of the worship of God, as may befall men exercising a good conscience, manifesting it in their conversation, and holding the foundation, not disturbing others in their ways or worship that differ from them, there is no warrant for the magistrate under the gospel to abridge them of their liberty."*

This is identical in spirit, and almost in letter, with the extract already quoted from John Cotton. It is explained and made clearer by a paragraph in the "Preface" to the document, in which the authors say:

"Secondly, let this be added (or superadded rather) to give full weight and measure, even to running over, that we have all along this season held forth (though quarreled with for it by our brethren) this great principle of these times, *That amongst all Christian States and Churches there ought to be vouchsafed a forbearance and mutual indulgence unto Saints of all persuasions, that keep unto and hold fast the foundations of faith and holiness*, in all other matters *extra fundamental*, whether of Faith or Order."†

This is toleration, to be sure, but of a very limited kind. Those who differ only in unessentials are to be tolerated, but the decision as to what are unessentials is, of course, to be made by the party in power. Under any fair interpretation of this Declaration it must be acknowledged that Papists, Jews, Unitarians, and infidels would not be tolerated. As for Anabaptists, the matter is left doubtful. To Baxter immersion seemed nothing less than a violation of the commandment, "*Thou shalt not kill*," and he would have had all Dippers summarily punished. To some of the Independents this may have seemed one of the minor matters in which liberty of practice should be allowed, but there is no explicit declaration fully to warrant that conclusion. Cromwell was, in some respects, an average Independent. What ground he took in the earlier part of his rule we have seen, but in later years his practice, if not his theory, changed. On December 25, 1655, he issued a Proclamation that

* "A Declaration of the Faith and Order Owned and Practiced in the Congregational Churches in England; Agreed upon and Consented unto by their Elders and Messengers in their Meeting at the Savoy, October 12, 1658." See Schaff's "Creeds of Christendom," Vol. III, page 707, sq.

† Ibid.

thenceforth no minister of the Church of England should dare to preach, administer the sacraments or teach schools on pain of imprisonment or exile.

The conclusion can not be evaded, therefore, that the Independents were opposed to an unlimited toleration of all religious bodies, and that the only denomination of Christians that maintained the doctrine of complete religious liberty for all men, before the adoption of the Toleration Act, were the despised Baptists.

NOTE.—Since the above article was written there has appeared in *The Congregationalist* a quotation from “A Declaration of Several of the People called Anabaptists in and about the City of London,” bearing date of 1659, and containing the following sentiments: ✓

“Whereas we are further charged with endeavoring an universal toleration of all miscarriage, both in things religious and civil, under pretence of liberty of conscience—it is, in both respects, notoriously false. And we do, before the Lord that shall judge both quick and dead, yea, before angels and men, declare our utter detestation of such a toleration; for in matters civil we desire there may not be the least toleration of miscarriage in any, much less in ourselves.

“Nor do we desire, in matters of religion, that Popery should be tolerated; the blood of many thousands of the people of God having been barbarously shed by the professors thereof; nor [do we desire] any persons tolerated that worship a false god; nor any that speak contemptuously and reproachfully of our Lord Jesus Christ; nor any that deny the Holy Scriptures contained in the Books of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God. And yet we are not against tolerating of Episcopacy, Presbytery, or any stinted form, provided they do not compel others to a compliance therewith.”

Those who join in this declaration except from those to be tolerated four classes—Papists, idolaters, blasphemers, rejecters of the Scriptures. Blasphemers are still punishable by civil law in every community, nor is such punishment persecution, inasmuch as speaking contemptuously and reproachfully of Christ is an infringement of the good order of society and threatens the peace of the common-

wealth, thus constituting itself a civil offense. But Papists, idolaters, and those who reject the Scriptures can not be punished by the civil power without persecution; hence, to this extent, the issuers of this Declaration advocated persecution. But that they were not many is clear—they describe themselves as “several”—that any others sympathized with them there is no proof, while ample evidence has already been given that these sentiments were rejected by the great body of Baptists. This is the first and only quotation that has been produced from a Baptist source in favor of persecution, even on this limited scale. It is anonymous, so far as appears, and how much weight is to be attached to the views expressed there is, therefore, no means of determining with accuracy. At most, the document proves that there were a few Baptists who had so ill understood the Scriptures, and were so ill instructed in fundamental Baptist principles, that they held views no better than those avowed by the most enlightened of the Independents. The rear-guard of the Baptist hosts was no farther advanced than the van-guard of the Independents, though it was far in advance of the foremost Presbyterians. I cheerfully make this admission. Candor requires that it should be made. Let Professor Briggs and his applauders draw from it all the satisfaction that it can be made to afford them.

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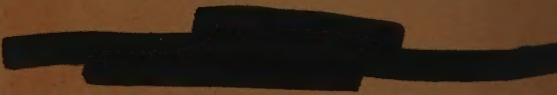
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